Scott MacDonald

Hollywood Outsider-Insider

An Interview with Chuck Workman

Chuck Workman's filmmaking career has taken a variety of twists and turns. During the late 1960s and early 1970s he made a living producing ads for whoever would hire him, and for a time worked as an editor for the Argentine director Leopoldo Torre Nilsson. Then he found his way into producing trailers for low-budget commercial productions and, later, for major studio releases, including *Star Wars* (1977), *The Wiz* (1978), *1941* (1979), and *Paris, Texas* (1983). In more recent years, he has produced and directed feature-length documentaries—*Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol* (1991) and *The Source* (1999), about the Beat Generation—and has made feature-length compilation histories: *The First Hundred Years* (1996), for HBO, traces the history of cinema, and *The Story of X* (1998), for the Playboy Channel, is a history of pornographic film. Workman has also written, directed, and produced several fiction features, most recently *A House on a Hill* (2002).

But Workman's forte is making films from other films. This ability is obvious in his documentaries and feature compilation films, but is most noteworthy in a series of films he has made for particular occasions. The most widely seen of these are the brief historical compilations he has produced for the Academy Awards shows over the past two decades. Two other compilation pieces—*Precious Images* (1985), which honors the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (it won an Academy Award for best live-action short), and *Pieces of Silver* (1989), made for Eastman Kodak on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of George Eastman's development of flexible-roll film—have been released as 16mm films; but Workman's history of comedy, his history of the world as told in the movies, his history of children in film, and so many others were seen on the annual awards show and then placed in the Academy archives.

In the best of his compilation pieces, Workman reveals his mastery of editing. His strategy is not just to provide a succession of moments of nostalgia and humor for film-loving audiences, but to create distinctive films that make a variety of implicit comments on the nature of commercial production and the ways in which it has been understood. Workman recycles clips from earlier films using a variety of classic editing strategies to provide energy, humor, and insight. At times, he'll present clusters of recycled shots that reveal an obvious similarity within equally obvious differences (people slapping other people in a wide range of Hollywood commercial features, for example); at other times, he'll build meta-continuities from bits of the continuities of other films, and send them crashing into images that take the film in an entirely new direction. While his goal is pleasing the audience, his montages can also achieve something well beyond the kinds of entertainment provided by Academy Awards shows.

The climax of *Pieces of Silver* is a particularly good example. It begins when Workman cuts from an audio clip of music from *Out of Africa* to an excerpt of the Talking Heads doing a rousing version of "Life During Wartime" in Jonathan Demme's *Stop Making Sense*. As is true throughout *Pieces of Silver*, Workman's recycled images come in a rush—more than a shot per second—energized by the rhythm of the music and arranged so as to create a complex set of experiences. Early in the montage, Workman provides a cluster of close-ups of characters within narrative features, looking directly at the camera, and he plays with par-

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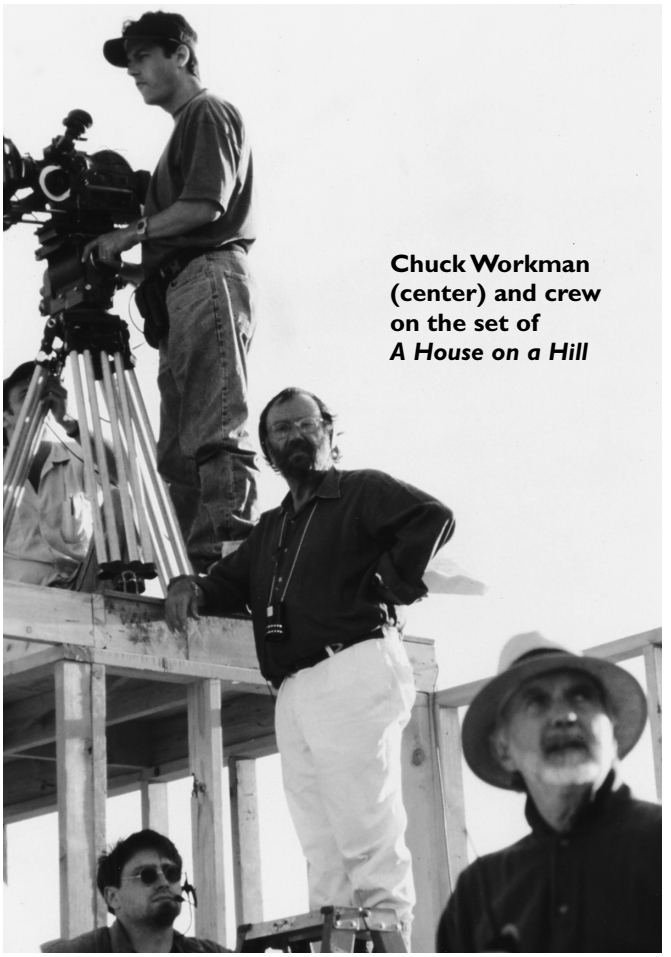


Chuck Workman (center) and crew on the set of *A House on a Hill*

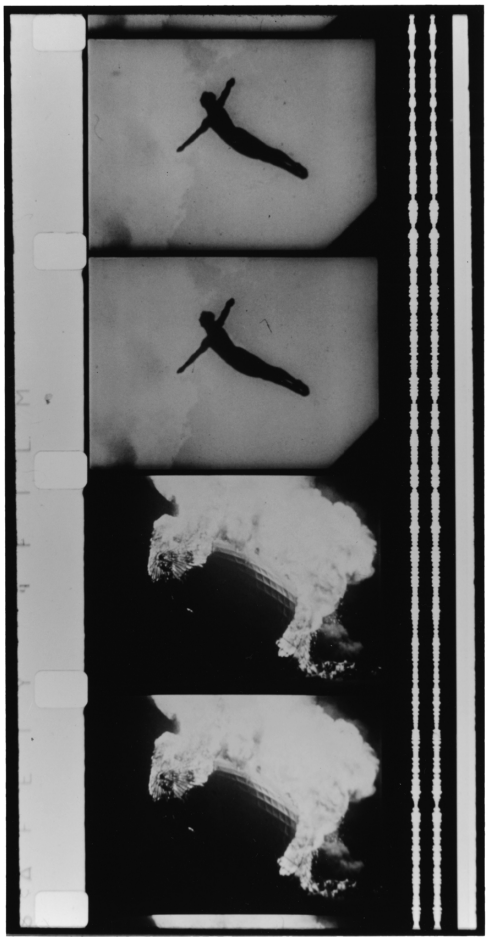
Courtesy Chuck Workman

Film strips shown in this article are all from Chuck Workman's *Pieces of Silver* (1989): successive shots of a diver in Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* and of newsreel footage of the Hindenburg exploding (p. 4); successive shots from Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc* and Stanley Donen's *Singin' in the Rain* (p. 6); successive shots from Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* and Sergei Eisenstein's *Potemkin* (p. 8).

ticular juxtapositions of images (a shot of Bogart in *Casablanca* lifting a cigarette to his lips is followed by a shot of James Dean in *Giant* lowering a cigarette), or surprises us either by returning to a particular image over and over (a man repeatedly trying to break a bottle of champagne over the prow of a ship), or with a series of shots of remarkable diversity: a close-up of the woman robot in *Metropolis* winking at the camera is followed by a long-shot of a huge explosion in the jungle, from *Apocalypse Now*, then by a long-shot of an amazing stunt where a man jumps out of a helicopter; then by a time-lapsed close-up of a rose blooming. The overall reaction to this sequence, at least for me, and for many of those I've shown the film to, is a rare form of exhilaration (I remember feeling the same way as a child seeing the original *King Kong* [1933] for the first time; and I've felt it more recently watching Bruce Conner's *Cosmic Ray* [1962], Martin Arnold's *Pièce Touchée* [1989], and Tom Twyker's *Run, Lola, Run* [1999]).

Workman's homage to the opening century of film/television history in *Pieces of Silver*—and much the same is true for his other compilation films—serves, on one level, as a meta-advertisement for the general experiences of moviegoing and television-watching. Like many viewers, I'm excited by the number of clips I can identify, and frustrated and intrigued by those I don't recognize: the film fanatic in me wants to make *all* the identifications. On another level, *Pieces of Silver* is frustrating because of its omissions. The film focuses on American commercial filmmaking, with at most honorific nods to European and Asian classics, and ignores entirely, or nearly so, the histories of documentary and of experimental/avant-garde filmmaking. This latter omission is particularly aggravating since Workman's method in *Pieces of Silver*, and in most of his occasional films, originates in the avant-garde tradition of recycled cinema or found-footage filmmaking—Esther Shub, Joseph Cornell, Bruce Conner, Ken Jacobs, Abigail Child, et al.—and in experiments with montage editing by Slavko Vorkapich, Stan Brakhage, Peter Kubelka, and others. When I mentioned my frustration to Workman, I got a surprisingly candid answer.

While Workman works in the heart of Hollywood, and has an access to the history of Hollywood cinema most independent filmmakers can only dream of, he continues to demonstrate a considerable range of interests and abilities, and to take chances with his reputation and his finances. *A House on a Hill* can easily be read as his artistic credo. Harry Mayfield (Philip Baker Hall), an aging architect, returns to rebuild a house he abandoned decades earlier after it burned down, killing his only son. When a Los Angeles couple becomes intrigued with the hilltop site, Mayfield's ex-wife (Shirley Knight) offers to sell them the land, with the understanding that Harry will design the home they plan to build. As Harry begins the project, a young filmmaker friend of the couple (Laura San Giacomo)



Courtesy Anthology Film Archives

decides to document the process. Later, when the couple abandons the project, and the documentary is put on hold, Harry decides to finish the house on his own.

Workman's contemplation of his own career is evident throughout the film. Harry's struggle with the couple's assumption that they know how this house should be designed clearly echoes the struggles of so many filmmakers working in the industry. The San Giacomo character's excitement about documenting the life of a creative person echoes Workman's own documentary projects. And Harry's final decision to build the house in his own way reflects Workman's commitment to this unusual narrative feature, and to his inventive experiments with the size and shape of the movie image throughout this film. Like both creators in the film, Workman is simultaneously recognizing his personal and artistic limits and honoring his ongoing capacity to surprise any attempt to underestimate or compartmentalize him.

I spoke with Workman in Beverly Hills in April 2000; we have corresponded via email since then.

MacDonald: *You've created an unusual niche for yourself where you make occasional films, in the sense of "occasional poetry": you make compilation films for particular occasions. Nearly every year at the Academy Awards they announce a new Chuck Workman compilation piece, and recently there's been enough applause to show that people have come to recognize a certain kind of work as yours.*

Workman: They've not only started to recognize me, they're starting to say, "Oh, no! Another Chuck Workman film?"

How long did you work on Precious Images*?*

Not very long. Two or three months. The Directors Guild was having a 75th Anniversary and they wanted to do a film. I'd been active in the Directors Guild, in what they call "special projects," and had made two documentaries for them: *The Director and the Image* and *The Director and the Actor* [both 1984]—for which I won a Cine Golden Eagle. As a result, I suggested I do something similar to those films for the Directors Guild anniversary: "A little trailer of everything that members of the Guild have done." "How long is it going to be?" "Well, under ten minutes." "They'll never run it if it's more than five or six minutes."

Of course, there were so many movies I needed to get into my little film that the cutting got faster and faster. I started finding these wonderful combinations of shots, the kind of edits that I'd been doing for years in ads and in trailers, but suddenly in this film I wasn't *selling* anything in particular. It was a wonderful moment for me. I was only worried if people would like *Precious Images*—it was so different.

Of course, it *wasn't* so different from *Koyaanisqatsi* [1984], which I had seen. I thought to myself, "If *that* works, I can make this work in the same way." Of course, the films by Stan Brakhage and others I had seen in my years in New York used a similar kind of cumulative editing, but no one I knew of had done that before in mainstream Hollywood, except for Slavko Vorkapich.

The irony is that Precious Images *is a fantastic selling film on a more general level: it sells the idea of a thorough awareness of commercial cinema. When I show it to students, they want to run out and see all the films they don't recognize, so that they can get all the jokes. And* I *still feel that way when I see the film.*

One of the reasons I was successful with *Precious Images* was because I was *allowed* to be successful. All I had to do was honor the American cinema in an interesting way—and have Robert Wise, as head of the committee, like what I did. Wise had been an editor; he looked at *Precious Images* and said, "This works." I was lucky.

Given what you've told me about having to suppress your own filmmaking urges for so long in order to get stuff sold, framing Precious Images *with shots from* Citizen Kane *is like a declaration of independence.*

That's true, though I don't think I was conscious of that at the time.

How did you decide on a structure for it?

I certainly didn't have a structure going into it. Toward the end of doing trailers, *they* had structure. I would get calls to do trailers, and I would generally have somebody who worked for me cut them. I might say, "O.K., give it a three-act structure, and edit to make sure two or three interesting things happen." That was the kind of structure I was looking for in *Precious Images*. In general, I thought, "It's a sprint. You take a breath and you go," but still it needed a shape.

You go through a series of genres . . .
Exactly right. I decided finally that I wasn't going to arrange the film chronologically; I'd arrange it roughly by genre.

You define genres, while simultaneously questioning what genre is, and how a given genre is defined at any moment. Once the viewer thinks you're into the Western, all of a sudden there's All the President's Men *[1978], which is not a Western, but also is kind of a Western.*
Actually I don't believe in genre theory, Scott. I think genre criticism is bogus. It's a great way for Hollywood to sell movies to 15-year-olds, but that's no art form. Visually I was saying, "I know you think these are all action movies, but in *Boy's Town* [1938], Spencer Tracy slapping Mickey Rooney is also a piece of action, even though that's a soppy, sentimental movie." So these *slaps* go together. It wasn't, Let's put all the kisses together and all the slapstick, so much as, Let's cut a kiss from the animation, *Lady and the Tramp* [1955], into the middle of these very romantic movies so you can see the surprising resonance in a particular image from one "genre" to another.

This comes back to being able to distance oneself from the material and not romanticize it too much. Of course, *Precious Images* is all happening at high speed, but people are getting it. That's what was so fulfilling for me: people *got* it. So, *part* of the structure worked off genre. Then I had a more free-form section with all the movies that I couldn't find a place for in that earlier section. The overall structure—"genre" in the beginning, free form in the middle, and then a big ending—evolved as I was doing the film. It took a lot of discipline, and still does when I do that kind of film now, to save the good scenes for the end. Even the history-of-the-world montage I did this year [2000] for the Oscars ended with a little recap, and I had to have the discipline to save good scenes for that.

Are you going to release History of the World *as a separate film, like* Precious Images *and* Pieces of Silver*?*
I don't think anybody would clear the rights. The whole trick of *Pieces of Silver* and *Precious Images* is that there were institutions behind them that could clear the finished pieces for other uses. To get the new piece out would require a lot of lawyers going through a lot of material, even if we got it for free. The only way to do this kind of film is with some sort of nonprofit institution. So the Academy *could* do it if they wanted to, but the Academy wouldn't do it because then every person that ever did a tribute for the Oscars would want to do the same thing.

I got all these jobs after *Precious Images*. Somebody called me from Paramount and from Universal, wanting me to do similar pieces for them, which I did, and the Writers Guild asked me to do *Words* [1988], which I like a lot. Then came *Pieces of Silver*. In that three- or four-year period I did a lot of those films. I also did another one for the Academy: *And the Winner Is* [1989].

History of the World *ends with shots from* Gandhi *[1982] and* Schindler's List *[1993]. Did you end there because you particularly admire these films?*
Far from it. I don't like *Gandhi*, and I'm not crazy about *Schindler*. No, not at all—they were just very dynamic images. I'm thinking about *images* in *movies*; I'm not really giving you what *I* think about history. I use imagery from *Braveheart* [1995], which I only saw the beginning of. *Jurassic Park* [1993] is far from my favorite movie, but I open with it. Sometimes I do like a film and want to include it, but in the end cut the shots out.

I wanted to include an image from Orson Welles' Shakespeare adaptation, *Chimes at Midnight* [1967], of the famous fight scene in the mud and the wonderful end line, from Shakespeare, "Jesus, the things that we have seen!" I love that line, but I couldn't get permission to use the word "Jesus"—it's easier to say "Fuck Canada" on the Oscars than to use "Jesus"!

You've found a way to use material made by other people so that it becomes yours. I got fooled by the Billy Crystal introduction at the beginning of the 2000 Academy Awards show because he used some of "your material," which isn't your material, but imagery you've used enough so that I think, "That must be Chuck Workman because I know that image."
I *said* to Billy Crystal, "You're using all my shots!" And he laughed because he got the joke. He did use my style, in a wonderful way. More power to him. So, yes, you *do* use that material and you try and make it your own, but of course it's *not* your own.

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives

You know better than me, there's very little new. Most of what I do, I'm sure I saw in a class at NYU, an extension class, taught by Amos Vogel. When I first went into film, I didn't know anything about experimental film, so I took his course, and watched all those experiments. I even did a parody (you can still get it on the Internet; my *daughter* found it!) called "50 Terrific Movies and How to Make Them," for *The Peter Max* magazine.

I always thought experimental film was important. I knew that there had to be more than Hollywood melodrama and conventional documentary. I knew that filmmakers must be checking out the alternatives, and that that had to be incredibly important. Except for that world, American cinema is almost bereft of experimentation. It's not just that there's no *funding* for experimental film; there's no *interest* in it in American theaters. None. Zero. You never get a Tarkovsky or a Kieslowski in the United States. Impossible. At best, you get somebody like Martin Scorsese, who's working in genre; or Ford, also working with genre.

A complaint I have with Pieces of Silver*, which for me is the best of your films, is that it goes through the various areas of film history, but never gets to experimental film. You do do a little of that in* The First Hundred Years*, true, but your limited references to this area seem strange, since your method is closer to experimental cinema than to almost anything else—especially to Bruce Conner's films and to the heavy editing in films you probably saw in Vogel's class. Was it that Eastman Kodak wouldn't have wanted a section on experimental film in your homage?*
They wouldn't have cared. They were always supportive.

So why *didn't* I do that? I'm trying to figure out why. There's *no* good reason. I used experimental animation in *Pieces of Silver,* and maybe I felt at the time that that was sufficient. I came to my senses a year or two later in *The First Hundred Years*. I put in Brakhage's baby from *Dog Star Man* [1962/3]—I cut from that to *Raging Bull* [1980]. *The Brig* [1964, by Jonas Mekas] is in *The Source*. And Bruce Conner is in *The Source*, because he was very much involved with the Beats.

I try to be as inclusive as possible, but yours is a very good criticism, I have to admit. I wish somebody would ask me to do a film about experimental film. I would need to remake my editing style—what would I do with Snow's *Wavelength* [1967]! I guess I could use *Back and Forth* [1969]. I'd find a way. I wouldn't parody those films; I'd do an homage—but still it would be fun and really interesting to do.

Actually, I don't know if I have the same contempt for experimental films that I do for Hollywood films, where I can step *away* and just make fun of *Lady and the Tramp*, or whatever. I don't know if I could make fun of some of those movies. They're done with such seriousness.

You mentioned Slavko Vorkapich earlier . . .
Vorkapich was always interesting to me. Amazing, really. I've looked at those scenes for *San Francisco* [1936] and some of his other montages, frame by frame. He probably influenced my work a lot. I went to a retrospective of his work in the late 60s and got interested in the outsider artist in Hollywood. Pablo Ferro was another, and Saul Bass.

My favorite passage in Pieces of Silver *begins when the music from* Stop Making Sense *comes on and ends with the woman robot's wink from* Metropolis *[1926] and the explosion from* Apocalypse Now *[1979]—what an exhilarating sequence!*
Oh, I felt very secure when I was doing that. I felt like I was putting everything in just the right place. And finding that music helped a lot. The history piece this year was the closest I've come in the last few years to a short compilation piece that was interesting *to me*. For the past ten years, most of that kind of creativity went into *Superstar*, *The Source,* and *The First Hundred Years*.

Actually, *The First Hundred Years* was pretty glossy. Every time I would try to do something offbeat or witty, HBO would stop me. The version *I* wanted had an edgier feel, wasn't as saccharine. I had a wonderful section where I intercut Fred Zinnemann and

Robert Altman, using the *High Noon* music. Zinnemann is saying, "You have to take your time and know *exactly* what you're doing beforehand"; then I cut to Robert Altman saying, "I don't want to know *anything* when I walk onto a set." I loved it. Altman said, "HBO's going to make you cut me out of it." I said, "Get out of here!" but HBO *did* have a problem with Altman at the time and kept suggesting that I take this sequence out of the film: "Well, it's not chronological; *High Noon* is the 50s and Altman is the 70s; it'll throw the viewer off." In the end, I took it out. Of course, Altman *is* in the film, but somewhere else.

Originally I came out here with a script with a lot of scenes in it and a lot of characters. A former head of Columbia, who was the producer I was talking to at the time, said, "Oh, that's very *Nashville*ian." And I said, "Oh, great!" I took it as a positive, not knowing he meant it as a negative. His bottom line was that *Nashville* [1975] didn't make any money.

The First Hundred Years led to a curious project. HBO and Warner Video released the film in a limited way and Hugh Hefner happened to run it in his screening room. He sent me a nice note, and I called him and was invited to visit the Playboy Mansion. We talked about doing a film together—he had just helped Rob Epstein with the financing of his film about gay images in cinema [*The Celluloid Closet,* 1996]—and for some reason I told him I was interested in doing a history of cinema as erotica or pornography or whatever you want to call it.

I hadn't seen too many of these movies, and had never even rented an X-rated video. But I loved the idea that there was a whole unexplored history that got along fine without any Hollywood support in production or distribution, that had its own look and style, however crude. So I made *The Story of X* for Playboy. It was fun and interesting at first, but got boring. I *was* able to sneak in an interview with Bertolucci and even a scene from *Weekend* [1967] with Bardot. It may be the first and only time Godard has played on the Playboy Channel.

Are you going to continue making the short occasional pieces?
I don't know. Every year I say, "No more!" I think I've done almost everything I want to do in that form. I'm more interested in longer work, and feel like I haven't really explored *that* in a way I might. I wish I were 20 years younger.

On the other hand, these short pieces *are* fascinating to do, and they support me, and I do learn things about my own work when I do them.

Are Superstar *and* The Source *the kinds of projects that most allow you to do what you really want to do?*
More than anything else, yes. Those are *my* movies. Any compromise I make, I make with myself. I did make many compromises, in both movies, to try to make them theatrical, but the funders didn't get in the way at all.

How did Superstar *come about? That's your first longer documentary.*
It *wasn't* my first. I had done other documentaries that hadn't worked, in the same way that I've done shorts that haven't worked.

When you say they "didn't work," you mean you finished them and then decided not to release them?
Almost. I didn't finish them with the polish that they should have had, or solve all the problems. Sometimes I make a film, and if there's no commercial reason for it to be finished properly, I just say, "OK, I've got what I wanted out of that"—and move on.

I made a documentary about Israel, in the late 80s during the Intifada. I was very interested, still am, in places where there's a revolutionary ferment going on within an established institution: Ireland, Israel, parts of Latin America. I spent some of my early career in Argentina, working as an editor for Leopoldo Torre Nilsson. When I was 22 years old, cutting toy commercials, the Mexican owner of a toy company wanted to make a feature, and he got Torre Nilsson—with the exception of Buñuel, the leading Spanish-language director in the world at that time—to direct. Torre Nilsson wanted to make an American film, so the film got made [*Monday's Child*, 1969]. Anyway, the toy company owner suggested me as an editor. Torre Nilsson said, "I have my own Argentine editors, thank you very much." "Yeah, but Chuck is *American* and you need an English-speaking editor; work with him and then you can fix things up with your Argentine editors." It turned out that Torre Nilsson liked the idea and liked me, and took me to Argentina for a second film [*The Traitors of San Angel*, 1971].

Then my son was about to be barmitzvah'ed, and I got very Jewish for those five minutes, and went to Israel, and discovered I *loved* Israel. I wanted to make a film about what was happening there (I called it *Keeper of the Light*). I had almost no money. I was the sound man, and I brought Burleigh Wartes, a great cameraman, with me. There was a big institutional film about Israel being made at about the same time, and I got some of that crew.

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives

It was shot in 16mm?
Yeah. I just shot whatever I wanted. I followed some tourists around. It was formless and sloppy and didn't really come together as a film. But I didn't care. It allowed me to learn about myself and about making documentaries. Everything I've ever done has been that way: I've done one or two things that don't quite work, and then I find out how that sort of thing should work, or at least what works for me.

What I enjoy most about Superstar *is Warhol's relatives in Pittsburgh. Here's this epitome of the sophisticated New York artist and you reveal that, ironically, what seems most New York about him is actually a kind of lower-class Pittsburgh take on things.*
Yes, and that seems obvious now, doesn't it? Why wouldn't anybody else shoot that? But if you know anything about life, you *know* that that's going to be true. This guy wasn't *born* weird; he came from somewhere.

Of course, another thing that happens when you're making a film is that you exploit—I use the word in a broad way—you exploit the material that works well. The documentaries I make *are* directed—no question. There are a lot of hand-held shots of the artwork in *Superstar*. No good documentary cameraman would ever shoot those shots hand-held. I said, "No, no, do it by hand." "But it'll shake!" "I know, but they're edgy people!" It's a visual metaphor that I try and take through the film.

I worked hard in *Superstar* and *The Source* to show different generations responding to a particular phenomenon. There are things in the 30s that I take seriously that people in the 40s didn't. I take avant-garde filmmakers very seriously now, but in the 60s the people I knew saw them as strange, incompetent people running around with 16mm cameras.

When you decided to do The Source*, at what point did you make the decision to have well-known actors play the Beats? For me, that doesn't work.*
For some people it doesn't; for other people that's the part that works best. When I made *Superstar,* I had tons of images to work with. But with *The Source* I was making a movie about three *writers*. Once I show all the Beatnik jokes from TV and film and cartoons, and do the interviews, what *visuals* do I have? How do I integrate what they were writing into the movie; how do I *show* it? I do use a lot of imagery of people typing, and there are scenes where you actually see the texts. But that still wasn't enough. So I thought, OK, I'm going to have pieces of these texts *performed*. But we all hate bad recreations. I decided to have actors play the personae of particular works, to take advantage of the fact that many of the Beats' writings were personal memoirs, or *felt* like personal memoirs. I could have used obscure actors, but I thought, "Why not get good actors? I'm using good music."

Of course, it was also financially strategic. It's much more interesting for somebody to watch Johnny Depp read Kerouac than to watch an actor who just *reminds* you of Jack Kerouac. But it *was* important to me that Johnny Depp, Dennis Hopper, and John Turturro are very good actors, and that they seemed the right actors with the right sensibilities.

To look at the end credits and see how many places you went to for bits that end up in The Source *suggests how much work goes into the kinds of compilation work you do.*
Well, *you* just asked me, where's the experimental film in *Pieces of Silver*! I feel I have an obligation to be inclusive. I don't want to leave anything out. If you're going to do the story of the Beats, you'd better try to include as much as possible. It was the same with Andy Warhol. We chased his art all over the world. He'd just died and the estate was nervous, and museums were afraid of offending the estate, and the estate didn't seem to want us to make the movie.

But I try not to take no for an answer. I try to chase the material as much as possible. I'll go all over the place. I will take no eventually, but I'd rather not give in to that right away. I'll say, "OK," and then I'll try them again. My budgets are a little better than some, so I'm able to push a bit, but I could never have bought the Rolling Stones song I use four minutes of, except that Mick Jagger liked the piece I wanted to use it with.

And Yoko Ono liked Andy Warhol, so I was able to get a John Lennon song.

How much of this do you do yourself? Who works with you?
It depends on the movie. Sometimes I have five people, sometimes only two. I generally have a coordinator, but often you have to call people yourself. Lots of lawyers are always involved in the compilation films. The Oscar show is very well-staffed because there's a lot of paperwork, and every image I use has to be cleared with a big fat contract, and there are a lot of questions. "Does Clint Eastwood know you're using this?" "Can you shoot a copy over to Meryl Streep so she can see what you're doing?"

Back when I made *Precious Images*, David Shepard, head of the Directors Guild special projects, made some phone calls to try to get permissions, but there was no concept of reusing material. People didn't know what to do with such requests. Disney was the first studio that really understood about reuse.

Actually, I think it's better for the movies that these images get out. People going into filmmaking now are seeing so many images, and even if you're not that excited about old images, you're seeing so many that they're going to affect you. And I find that very positive for the future, because if we can constantly see all this stuff, we'll get to recognize the junk and why it's junk. In the long run, that will allow filmmakers to make more sophisticated movies that more people will understand.

I see your new feature, A House on a Hill*, as a kind of Workman artistic credo. Both Harry and the filmmaker documenting him seem to represent dimensions of your career: you're dealing, like most of us older guys, with the process of aging and the construction of a career, a body of work; and like the filmmaker in the film, you've made documentaries about creative people. Was this project, for you, an expression of your current thinking about your life as a filmmaker?*

And is the film personal in other ways? Forgive my asking, but have you lost a child?
No. The film isn't as autobiographical as it might appear to be. I wanted the accident to the child to show how powerfully everyday experience can impinge on the life of an artist, and the possible consequences of that. I'm something of a stubborn guy myself, like Harry, so I understood that part pretty well. The guilt of the mother, who inadvertently got the whole tragedy started, is the guilt of the well-meaning parent who tries for some happiness for herself and inadvertently causes harm to her children. As a child of divorced parents, I saw a bit of that, although never to this extreme. But in terms of career and recognition, I've been luckier than Harry, and can't really identify with his frustrations, although I understand them, or with his purity, which I envy.

The genesis of this script was written more than 15 years ago, when I did feel pretty frustrated, when I was ready to give up on film and devote myself to theater. It wasn't until I had given up the commercial track I was on that I was ready to return to film, and got to work on some things I felt strongly about artistically. In the original script, the character of Harry Mayfield was older, about 80, and the idea was that he would go back and finish his career, and his life, by creating his last "monument" (the title then was *Mayfield's Monument*). The current film ends differently: the emphasis is not on the monument but on Mayfield; not on artistic legacy, but on the artistic process. I suppose I've learned that just doing something in the present should be as important as what the future will think of the work—but that's a difficult idea to live your life by and takes some courage. Harry has that courage.

Your exploration of the possibilities of shaping the image is both unusual and effective. Indeed, the device confirms the idea of the film as your artistic credo, since your shaping space is analogous to Harry's. Was the idea of working with the shape of the screen always a part of your thinking about this project?
I'm going through a period in my own little stylistic mind where I'm playing with the shape of the screen and with boxes inside the screen. I call it "the *Thomas Crown Affair* effect," because the first *Thomas Crown Affair* [1968] did that. Why not change the screen shape if it's integral to some overall vision? The idea of a story about an architect who shapes space provides a narrative-based excuse for reshaping the screen, but I would hope the technique does more than that. The shape of the screen contracts as Harry concentrates on his designs. The screen is very wide when we see the characters who are part of the world outside of Harry, and these wider frames are comparatively busy. All I can say is that I did try to work out when to use the device and when not to, but my "rules" were flexible. The device does distance the viewer —a bit in a Brechtian way I hope: it makes you aware that this is a little different than a traditional narrative you'd lose yourself in, and might make you watch more carefully.

This film takes some chances. It's a film about an aging man with no romantic life—hardly a typical Hollywood

topic—and it's obviously experimental in form. How well will the film need to do for you to be satisfied with it? Who do you see as the audience?

The film will be released in various media in a small way in late 2003 and will be out there in some form. I hope people will find their way to it. There certainly were moments when I thought to myself that certain fixes might make the film more audience-friendly, more accessible, less experimental-looking. With some judicious editing, the aging main character could be changed into a sentimental old codger up against the world. But I thought, "Why do that? This is a chance, maybe one of the few chances I'll have, to make a film the way *I* see it." I'm always running around saying that films ought to be more adventurous, and that the art of film should be farther along after more than a century, that it shouldn't be so commercially oriented—so I might as well try to follow these ideas in my own work. At the same time, I like to think I have this unspoken dialogue with an audience—some audience somewhere—and that my films can connect with that audience.

Of course, not all our films work, or have the effect we wish they would. So we try again.

Scott MacDonald's most recent books are *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films About Place* and *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society*. He is preparing a fourth volume of interviews with independent filmmakers, *A Critical Cinema 4*, for the University of California Press. He teaches at Bard College and Hamilton College.

Chuck Workman's *Precious Images* and *Pieces of Silver* are available from the Museum of Modern Art's Circulating Film Program.

Abstract Scott MacDonald: "Hollywood Outsider-Insider: An Interview with Chuck Workman." Scott MacDonald talks with Chuck Workman, who began his career producing advertisements and trailers for low-budget films, then graduated to trailers for big-budget films (*Star Wars*; *Paris, Texas . . .*), and to feature documentaries (*Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol*; *The Source*), dramatic features (most recently, *A House on a Hill*, to be released later this year), and short and feature-length compilation films, including the historical mini-retrospectives that enliven the Academy Awards shows, year after year.

Erratum

The image for Stan Brakhage's *Ellipses Reel 2*, in *Film Quarterly* Vol. 56, No. 3 (p. 4), should have appeared as originally provided by Fred Camper, with only one line of sprocket holes, as the film is printed on single-perf stock. We apologize for this error.

—Editor

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William Johnson

A New View of Porn

The Films of Tatsumi Kumashiro

Above: *Love Letter*
Right: *The Woman with Red Hair*

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Pornographic film is a genre that exists in critical twilight. Western genre studies usually exclude it.[1] Other theoretical or critical approaches are often overshadowed by a need to conform to feminist criticism of filmed sexual acts as the degradation of women for the pleasure of male viewers.[2] The difficulty of discussing pornography is compounded by the fact that the term itself is pejorative, often paired with evil, violence, greed, and other unsavory acts or desires. Not surprisingly, pornography in film, or in general, is almost impossible to define objectively.[3]

The status of film pornography is further confused when "serious" filmmakers use pornographic elements, as for example Nagisa Oshima (*In the Realm of the Senses*), Catherine Breillat (*Romance*), Claire Denis (*Trouble Every Day*), and Patrice Chéreau (*Intimacy*).[4] Critics almost always treat such films not as representing the pornographic genre but as aberrations, exceptions or justified variations on the auteurs' usual approaches.[5] I hope to throw a different light on the pornographic film by focusing on the reverse situation—an indisputable maker of screen porn whose films

Film Quarterly, Vol. no. 57, Issue no. 1, pages 11-19. ISSN: 0015-1386. © 2003 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

also deserve "serious" interest: the Japanese director Tatsumi Kumashiro (1927-1995).

Japan has never had a dominant religion that viewed the pleasure of sex as immoral, and although Japanese society may be termed sexist by Western standards, it has generally assumed that women may enjoy sex as much as men.[6] The depiction of sex on Japan's commercial screens since World War II may seem superficially to have followed a similar pattern to that of the United States, with mainstream films shown in regular theaters and soft-core porn (that is, excluding scenes with genitals or actual sex) shown in specialized theaters, until the development of hard-core video in the late 1980s drove the latter out of business. In Japan, however, the border between mainstream and porn was much more porous. Many Japanese filmmakers who began in porn moved into the mainstream, while some mainstream directors made films with soft-porn-like content, such as Kon Ichikawa with *Kagi* (*The Key* [*Odd Obsession*], 1959), and Shohei Imamura with *The Pornographers* (1966).[7]

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Following Desire

The typical Japanese soft-porn films of the 1960s and 1970s, known as *pinku eiga* ("pink films"), were quickies made on minimal budgets with minimal (and usually inexperienced) crews. They were often filmed in a single location, with little use of color even after color became the standard, and rarely ran longer than one hour. Meanwhile, Kumashiro was gaining film experience of a different kind. He had joined the Nikkatsu Studio in 1955 and became one of the last Japanese filmmakers to go through a traditional mainstream apprenticeship, working as an assistant director and also writing screenplays. When he finally got a chance to direct, in 1968, his film failed at the box office, and he reverted to assistant.

By 1971, attendance at Japanese movie theaters had fallen so low that Nikkatsu was close to bankruptcy. The studio heads therefore decided that from now on they would produce nothing but soft-core porn (and also some films for children). Their porn would, however, be of higher quality than pink films: it would have much bigger budgets (though still small by mainstream standards), experienced crews (including not only Kumashiro but also his frequent cinematographer Shinsaku Himeda, who worked regularly with Imamura), ten-day shooting schedules, running times of 70 to 80 minutes, and widescreen color. The only porn requirement was a sex scene every ten minutes; otherwise filmmakers were free to make whatever kind of films they liked. To distinguish these films from the pink kind, Nikkatsu dubbed them *roman poruno*—romantic porn.[8]

Some directors quit Nikkatsu rather than become involved in porn, and Kumashiro was promoted again. Already 44, he seized the opportunity to extend the range of soft porn to issues, situations, and approaches that appealed to him. His second *roman poruno*, *Following Desire* (*Ichijo Sayuri: nureta yokujo* [1972]) was a tremendous box-office success, and in the next two years Kumashiro completed ten films, acquiring a reputation as the "king" of *roman poruno*. Other companies invited him to direct films for them, and although these had no porn label they fitted into the varied range of *roman poruno* that he continued making for Nikkatsu.[9]

One reason for the fit is that in Kumashiro's porn and non-porn films alike, he focused on sex and the sexuality of women as a crucial element of human life. In his non-porn films he did this with visual discretion. In his porn films, though they are visually less revealing than many R-rated films today, he could make his sex scenes appear close to hard core. At the same time, he integrated the obligatory sex scenes into an almost

© Tokyo Eiga Shinsha

Bitterness of Youth

unlimited range of other elements—dramatic, comic, satirical, social, political. In short, Kumashiro saw porn as imposing fewer constraints on theme and narrative than almost any other genre.[10]

Finding a Flexible Style

Porn involves other constraints, however. Although the budgets and production schedules for *roman poruno* were more generous than those for pink films, they still required strict economies. Kumashiro found ways to turn these practical constraints into advantages, developing a style that blended the porn and extra-porn aspects of his films without in any way overshadowing the latter.

His sets are rarely elaborate or even large, unless they're real interiors (such as a movie theater), but the angles at which they are shot shift frequently, creating a sense of multiple spaces. Kumashiro also includes a surprising number of locations, with a preference for unspectacular streets and open areas. *Twisted Path of Love* (*Koibitotachi wa nureta* [1973]), for instance, consists of more than 90-percent real exteriors, giving the sex scenes a surreal touch. He doesn't attempt to match interiors and exteriors by means of doorway or window views, or to make the different exteriors conform to any mental map. By filming on the fly, Kumashiro creates a notional world that appears both dense and realistic.

For speed of filming, Kumashiro often uses a handheld camera. There are few if any close-ups, shot/reverse-shots or other setups that require frequent rearrangements, complex lighting, or exact shot matching. Minimizing sync sound by post-recording or other means offers an easy budget-saver, and Kumashiro is expert at exploiting these strategies. He often uses rapid songs or chants as a kind of commentary, as in *Following Desire* and *Twisted Path of Love*. Many scenes, including those involving sex, have little or no dialogue. He also avoids sync sound by using superimposed titles, notably in *The World of Geisha* (*Yojohan fusuma no urabari* [1973]): "Rules for Geisha, No. 1: Don't fall for your first client," as a young geisha clearly does just that. Often, too, he relies on apparently natural sounds to convey meaning. In *The Bitterness of Youth* (*Seishun no satetsu* [1974]), a gradual and sinister crescendo of what turns out to be rushing water accompanies a pregnant woman and her lover as they approach the unseen mountain torrent where he will murder her.[11] In *Appassionata* (*Modorigawa* [1983]), the camera stays on a woman cradling the dead body of her husband as she rocks in a chair, which creaks and turns gradually in an arc, like the heavy hand of a ticking clock. In several of his other films, similar scenes with little or no dialogue (or rapid action) hold the narrative in suspense.

In editing, Kumashiro makes frequent use of inserts and cutaways. While these allow flexibility in adjusting continuity and pacing and in maintaining the viewer's interest, they also serve a more active purpose. The inserts, unlike the transitional shots of Ozu and other traditional Japanese filmmakers, are jolting rather than restful. In *The World of Geisha*, set in 1918, they refer to historical events of the time, such as a newspaper report of rice riots, a police document banning news reports of the riots, and the dispatch of Japanese troops to Siberia to fight the Reds. In *Love Bites Back* (*Kamu onna* [1988]), a crowd of angry demonstrators threatens a character driving a car. In other films the inserts may be less specific: in *Following Desire*, the same shot of pigeons fluttering up from the street breaks in unexpectedly on three occasions; in *Twisted Path of Love*, the inserts include the hulk of an abandoned freighter and cormorants perched on a huge rock. But in both cases, they remind the viewer that a world exists outside the film's diegesis.

Cutaways from one narrative strand to another also serve to hold the viewer's interest. In *The World of Geisha*, at least one-third of the film's running time is taken up with geisha Sodeko's first night with new client Shinsuke, but this is intercut with subplots

involving other geisha and clients. The rest of the film, in which Sodeko and Shinsuke marry and he becomes progressively more inconsiderate and unfaithful, covers possibly months of diegetic time. This too is intercut with scenes of the other characters, but now the Sodeko/Shinsuke scenes are just as discontinuous as the others, if not more so. Here, as in many other Kumashiro films, the time relation between sequences remains unspecified, even though the narrative events are unilinear or parallel.

Which means that the one kind of cutaway or strategy that Kumashiro does *not* rely on is the flashback. There is little or no backstory in his films: nearly everything that a viewer knows about the characters and situations emerges from what is seen in, or spoken in reference to, the diegetic present. Thus the films create a strong sense of immediacy, even—or especially—when a character appears to act inconsistently or from unclear motives.

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The World of Geisha

Kumashiro uses simple strategies to create a variety of distinctive characters. In some films (including *The World of Geisha* and *Following Desire*), the central narrative is punctuated by subplots whose characters contrast with or comment obliquely on the actions and attitudes of the central characters. In others, such as *Twisted Path of Love* and *Like a Rolling Stone* (*Bo no kanashimi* [1994]), there is one pivotal character who provokes various reactions among the others and in turn reacts differently to them.

Kumashiro brings some characters into relief by giving them an idiosyncratic gesture that usually has a comic aspect. In *Following Desire*, sex performer Harumi raises one leg in the air when she achieves orgasm or is otherwise excited. In *The Bitterness of Youth*, central character Kenichiro and a fellow student are seen in American football uniforms rhythmically practicing shoulder blocks and tapping their helmets together. Afterward, when Kenichiro goes to a friend's home, he taps his head and shoulders on the front door and then, while chatting, taps his way around the walls of the room. In *Like a Rolling Stone*, ruthless *yakuza* Tanaka goes in for energetic polishing of his furniture. Such actions, so common in Kumashiro's films that they were dubbed "Kumashiro gymnastics," bear an unexpected resemblance to Bresson's "automatism"—the stripping away of conscious acting in his "models."[12]

A Convenient Setting: The Sex Trade

After a survey of style that mentions sex only incidentally, it may be difficult to imagine how the pornographic elements fit into Kumashiro's work. But they fit extremely well. The sex scenes both shape and are shaped by the characters, narrative, and tone of each film. This holds true even for the films that involve the sex trade, which would seem to offer ample pornographic opportunities with a minimum of narrative invention and characterization. *Following Desire* (which Kumashiro also scripted) offers a clear example.

The film focuses on women who perform in *tokudashi* ("special exposure"), or sex shows. Sayuri Ichijo (named in the Japanese title) was both a pioneer of *tokudashi* and the most popular real-life sex performer at the time, and in the film she and other performers not only strip but also display their genitals at close quarters to the audience (though not to the camera), rub their breasts with wax dripping from candles, and simulate masturbation and lesbian coupling. A title informs us that, while the film was being made, Sayuri Ichijo was being prosecuted for public obscenity. Several times during the film the police raid the *tokudashi* house and arrest the women but take no action against

either the audience or the manager, who bails them out so they can return to performing. Without any hypocritical moralizing, the film lets us see how women, and not the men who enjoy or profit from their performances, bear the brunt of official disapproval.

Intertwined with the film's "documentary" elements are various narrative strands that involve an ambitious younger performer, Harumi. Determined to outdo Sayuri, Harumi practices pouring a milky liquid into her vagina, retaining it, and then releasing it at will. The film ends with a triumphant performance of her controlled "wetness"—filmed from the rear in full body framing—as she thrusts one leg "gymnastically" in the air.

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Twisted Path of Love

As described in isolation, that female "money shot" may be dismissed as simply demeaning to women. Seen in context, however, it becomes multivalent. To American eyes, *tokudashi* is a notorious example of sexism in Japanese culture. Ironically, in Sayuri Ichijo's real-life court case, she fought for and won the right to continue her sex shows on the basis of freedom of expression. As for fictional Harumi, she is far from the idealized passive woman: she's lively, amusing, talkative, manipulative, mendacious, rather mean, and aggressively ambitious. Should one look down on her because she's all too human and her ambition is confined to sex shows? In the final scene, the stage lights in front of her obliterate any sight of the male audience and turn her into a star. The real-life audience among whom I saw the film, at least half of them women, laughed and applauded.[13]

A different kind of female money shot occurs in *The World of Geisha*. A geisha "specialist" arrives to entertain the house. Naked (but filmed from the rear), she places a stack of coins on the floor, crouches down, and takes them into her vagina. Then she stands up and begins to drop the coins, at first one by one and then faster.

That performance, too, may seem merely demeaning, but like Harumi's, it's considerably qualified. The specialist is strikingly tall and self-possessed. Except for an elderly patron and his "jester" (who also entertains the geisha), the onscreen audience consists of women (the house geisha and staff), and they all watch in respectful silence. The scene offers a break not only in the narrative but also in the "normal" socioeconomic order, with its equation of money=phallus=power. Symbolically, the specialist controls that power.[14]

Besides *Following Desire* and *The World of Geisha*, Kumashiro made half a dozen other films focusing on the overt sex trade. It can be inferred that he accepted its existence, but also that he sympathized with and even admired the women who plied that trade.

Outside the Sex Trade

Kumashiro's other films take on the worlds of *yakuza*, truckers, vagabonds, students, urban nouveau riche, and small-town working class, focusing mainly on characters already on the margins of society (as also are those in the sex trade) or else moving in that direction. Sex appears in a variety of narrative contexts and plays a variety of roles, few of them conventional. In *The Bitterness of Youth* (based on a Japanese novel that in outline is the same as Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*), law student Kenichiro is engaged to a wealthy cousin, but after his compulsive desire for the working-class Kyoko leads to pregnancy, he ends up a murderer. In *Like a Rolling Stone*, *yakuza* Tanaka has a comradely sexual relationship with Yoshie, a woman of his clan, while seducing an innocent young woman as a first step to prostituting her—with Yoshie then

taking over. In *Love Bites Back*, hard-core video maker Yuichi says (and demonstrates) that he'll have sex with anyone but his wife Chikako. He also says, in Chikako's hearing, that both wish each other dead—and she acts on her wish.[15]

The most unusual of Kumashiro's films is *Twisted Path of Love*, which he also co-scripted.[16] Here the alternation and simultaneity of sex, comedy, drama, and narrative surprise become extraordinarily complex. Yet the basis of the film is simple: the central character, a young man named Katsu, who has drifted around Japan working at odd jobs, now returns temporarily to his hometown, a small fishing port. His arrival becomes disruptive because he denies that he is Katsu and also because he tends to act like someone unfamiliar with the norms of human behavior. Here I outline only the sex scenes and the ending.

Katsu gets a job at the town's porn movie theater, and the first sex scene occurs when the owner's neglected wife seduces him.

The next day Katsu comes across a young couple, Mitsuo and Yoko, having sex while standing among tall reeds near the sea. He stands close and watches their rising annoyance and sexual animation. Afterward, Mitsuo beats him up.

Later, Mitsuo and Yoko suggest that Katsu needs a woman and introduce him to a friend, Sachiko. She willingly accompanies Katsu into the bushes, but after she calls him by his name he angrily tries to rape her. She fights him off.

Mitsuo and Yoko invite Katsu to meet Sachiko again. She, however, has brought along Katsu's mother to prove his identity. Katsu chases Sachiko down to the beach and again tries to rape her. Mitsuo and Yoko conduct a running commentary on Katsu's attempt. They think he's successful, though when Sachiko gets away she shouts that he wasn't.

When Katsu decides to move on, Mitsuo and Yoko drive him part way. (At one point Yoko gets onto a bus with Katsu, and Mitsuo follows angrily in the car.) The three start playing leapfrog on a beach, gradually stripping naked as they do so. Mitsuo suddenly has sex with Yoko. At first she resists and asks Katsu for help, but then becomes aroused.

Afterward, Katsu is riding a bike in circles with Yoko on the back. He tells her cheerfully that he killed someone for 200 yen and pulls the money out to show her. She laughs. Mitsuo suddenly stabs Katsu in the back and the bike rolls into the sea. He may or may not be dead.

It should be clear that *Twisted Path of Love* is not a conventional narrative into which sex scenes have been dropped like chocolate chips into cookie batter. Nor are the actors distinguished by superb bodies and little else. The film is a comedy-drama of unease in which sex plays a continual and offbeat role.

The Redemption of Porn?

Twisted Path of Love stands out from Kumashiro's other films mainly for its expansion of their common attributes. The most basic of these is the evocation of more arousing or aroused flesh than (without full frontal nudity, let alone cum shots or parted labia) is actually shown. Thus the rear view of Harumi's wetness in *Following Desire* and of the "specialist" dropping coins in *The World of Geisha* conjures up the physicality of the vagina.[17] In *The Bitterness of Youth*, the rhythmic "uhs" that punctuate Kyoko's singing during sex with Kenichiro manifest the thrusts of his penis inside her body, even though she (with legs on his shoulders) is mostly out of frame below and he partly out of frame above. *Twisted Path of Love* uses a different strategy: in the first sex scene between Mitsuo and Yoko, and in Katsu's second attempt to rape the friend, Kumashiro masks their genital areas with two black rectangles that change shape and position as necessary; for the leapfrog sequence, Yoko's pubic hair is obliterated by Brakhage-style scratches. These devices, required to avoid trouble with the law, in fact call attention and imagination to the censored areas, all the more so because the rectangles are continually shifting and the scratches stand out in fully animated white.

Such arousal scenes evoke more than just the body. The visual dislocation of Kyoko and Kenichiro reflects their cross-purposes: she hopes to marry him, while he wants to break with her and marry his wealthy cousin. In *Like a Rolling Stone*, when Tanaka seduces the young woman he intends to prostitute, he manhandles her breasts, squeezing them in opposite directions—a distortion of her body that foreshadows the distortion of her mind. In *Twisted Path of Love*, the cinema owner's wife wants sex with Katsu mainly because her husband rejects her for another woman, and Katsu responds noncommittally (much as he coolly watches Mitsuo and Yoko), but he becomes fired up to the point of rape when Sachiko threatens his (non)identity. Thus Kumashiro does more than increase the arousal power of his soft porn; he also presents sex as an activity that's fueled by a variety of human aims and mental states, including ambition, anger, fear, power, boredom, loneliness, and obsession.

© Toho-Towa

Appassionata

One disturbing effect in many of Kumashiro's films comes from the mixing of humor (including "gymnastics") into the darker aspects of sex. *The Bitterness of Youth* is among the least disturbing in this particular way because the humor and gymnastics fade out before the intent to murder fades in. But other films bring humor and revulsion much closer together. In *Like a Rolling Stone*, after Tanaka has seduced the innocent young woman, he deliberately provokes her boyfriend to slash him in the abdomen. Tanaka calmly goes home, calls Yoshie to bring needle and thread, spits alcohol over the wound and sutures himself—a scene that goes from bizarre to hilarious as Yoshie is turned on by the procedure and he has to cool her off with a hand shower. In *Following Desire*, humor is continually intertwined with the sex performances and arrests. And in *Twisted Path of Love*, Mitsuo's and Yoko's mock running commentary and the shifting black rectangles superimpose humor on the lengthy (attempted) rape.

It seems almost certain that Kumashiro intended such scenes to be disturbing, since he takes such pains to eliminate the fantasy element of sexual arousal. The viewer sees realistic women with human flaws rather than fantasized sex objects. None of the sex performers in *Following Desire* or the geisha in *The World of Geisha* look or behave alike, and the victim of Katsu's assault is stocky enough for her struggle against him to be believable. The inserts of the "outside world" also militate against any illusion of seamless fantasy in the diegesis.

In addition, the male characters who enjoy sex in Kumashiro's films are far from idealized. While the women's flaws may include a lack of female solidarity (Harumi dissing her fellow performers in *Following Desire*, Yoko calmly watching the rape of her "friend" Sachiko in *Twisted Path of Love*, Yoshie corrupting the innocent woman in *Like a Rolling Stone*), male bonding is even more fragile. In *Twisted Path of Love*, Katsu fights with his former best friend and is stabbed by his new "friend"; in *The World of Geisha*, the elderly patron treats his "jester" with brutal contempt; Yuichi and his closest friend split up in *Love Bites Back*; and the poet in *Appassionata* seduces the wife of his anarchist friend as soon as the latter goes on the run.

Sexist loners can of course be presented as admirable (witness the Western genre), but Kumashiro's loners possess prominent traits of the ridiculous or the repulsive. Harumi's lover in *Following Desire* is a thickhead just out of jail for murder, and she easily manipulates him. The poet who pursues woman after woman in *Appassionata* is an egotistic liar who eventually commits suicide. Yuichi in *Love Bites Back* is a near-monster of callousness (and aware of it), and he comes to an ignominious end.

In sex scenes, Kumashiro even tweaks the male viewer by making use (where possible) of the transferred gaze. That is, he shows viewers in the film seeing what is denied to those in the theater—and the onscreen gazers rarely flatter the real-life viewer. In *Following Desire*, they're passive elderly men, reminding the male viewer that he too is passive as well as incompletely satisfied. In *Twisted Path of Love*, it's oddball Katsu who gazes at Mitsuo and Yoko having sex, and then it's those unreliable lovers who gaze at Katsu's rape.

There are only two generic points of distinction between the *roman poruno* of Kumashiro and the works of the "serious" filmmakers mentioned earlier (Oshima, Breillat, Denis, Chéreau): the requirement of a sex scene every ten minutes and the porn label. Neither tells us Kumashiro's full intent in the sex scenes, let alone in each film as a whole. I've already suggested that the sex scenes were intended to be disturbing as

well as arousing, and virtually all of the films I've discussed have a dark undercurrent that in many cases bursts to the surface: murder in *The Bitterness of Youth*, *Love Bites Back* and (possibly) *Twisted Path of Love*; mental cruelty in *The World of Geisha*, *Appassionata*, *Love Bites Back* and *Like a Rolling Stone*; death and separation in *Love Letter*. Only *Following Desire* ends on a temporarily upbeat note.

In short, Kumashiro shows as much of the dark side of life as do many "serious" filmmakers, although he constantly balances it, and often mixes it, with the lighter side. What's more, he presents both sides with an easy detachment—an attitude that seems paradoxical in a filmmaker concerned with sexual arousal. Yet in his best films, Kumashiro's detachment enables the viewer to see those disparate elements—the dark, the light, and the sexual—as a complex unity.

William Johnson is *Film Quarterly*'s New York editor.

Notes

My thanks to Kyoko Hirano and Reina Higashitani of the Japan Society for help in preparing this article.

1. Most American studies of film genres focus on Hollywood cinema and therefore exclude pornography. Of the texts I checked, the most mentions (some as "adult films" or "stag movies" and all incidental) were five in Rick Altman's *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999). Of course, since the generic requirements for porn filmmakers are usually no more than a minimum number of sexual scenes, other genres often supplement the narrative. Without embarking on a long discussion of the fluidity and mixing of genres, I think it's reasonable to say that the presence and nature of the sex scenes determine whether a film is considered pornographic.
2. Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin are the best known feminist opponents of porn. Linda Williams, in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and "the Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), is by no means so dismissive. In her conclusion she writes: "Porn is not one thing, but sexual fantasy, genre, culture, and erotic visibility all operating together. And if fantasy, coming from the deepest regions of the psyche, is most resistant to change, then genre and culture are most capable of change" (270).
3. Williams, ibid., defines film pornography as "visual (and sometimes aural) representation of living bodies engaged in explicit, usually unfaked, sexual acts with a primary intent of arousing viewers" (29-30). That definition (offered only as minimal) is as good as a usefully short one could be, but "intent" has to rest on assumptions.
4. Experimental films are rarely taken into account, although they have a fairly long tradition of using porn elements. Barbara Rubin's lyrical *Christmas on Earth* (1962), for example, not only provides its own scenes of frontal nudity and sexual interplay but also borrows a hard-core cum shot. Jack Smith's softer but cheekier *Flaming Creatures* (1963) became legendary for being hounded by the police.
5. Susanne Kapler, in *The Pornography of Representation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), rejects the distinction between porn and "artistic" films containing porn elements, such as Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976), and although I disagree with her blanket condemnation of both she does raise a good point, since Oshima's film is just as likely to arouse viewers as a less polished version of sexual activities. David Desser, in *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), argues that "there is a specifically political dimension to [*In the Realm of the Senses*]. In this instance, politics is present by its absence. . . . We must conclude that any relationship which tries to deny the outside world by creating a private world . . . is doomed" (27-28). This attempt to place the film above porn is ingenious but unconvincing. In the furor that arose in Japan (primarily over the publication of the screenplay, illustrated by stills), Oshima questioned what was wrong with obscenity. The most reasonable political reading of the film is as a call for freedom of pornographic expression.
6. Akane Shiratori, a woman script supervisor who joined Nikkatsu the same year as Kumashiro and worked regularly with him, reports his saying about one of his films: "A woman came to live in a man's room. This is the male point of view. It is also possible to see it as a film about a woman who finds a man who satisfies her sexual desire." Quoted in a speech given at the Japan Society, New York City, March 21, 2001.
7. *Kagi*, based on a novel by Junichiro Tanizaki that involves scopophilia and other erotic variations, was remade by Kumashiro in 1974.
8. Some sources interpret the term as coming from the French word *roman* and meaning "novel-type porn." This would fit Kumashiro's work better than "romantic."
9. Partly because of poor health, Kumashiro's productivity declined sharply in the 1980s. He was in and out of hospital and sometimes had to use an oxygen tank while directing.
10. Note that I have seen only eight of Kumashiro's 34 films, and although I have studied synopses and critiques of his others, my statements about his work in general should be understood as referring fully only to those eight.
11. This was Kumashiro's first non-Nikkatsu film, made for Tokyo Eiga at that company's invitation. Only someone timing the frequency of sex scenes would notice that it is not a *roman poruno*.
12. Robert Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography* (New York: Urizen, 1977), 13f. The resemblance seems particularly plausible in the case of *The Bitterness of Youth*: Kenichiro was played by a well-known pop singer, Kenichi Hagiwara, and his performance gives no hint of a microphone idol's persona.
13. It's an indication of the porosity between mainstream and porn in Japan that the annual Kinema Jumpo film awards (Japan's most prestigious) chose Hiroko Isayama as best actress of 1972 for her performance as Harumi. The awards have also included porn films in their ten-best lists.
14. Kyoko Hirano, in the "Japan" chapter of *World Cinema Since 1945* (William Luhr, ed. [New York: Ungar, 1987]),

writes: "Pornographic films normally cater to male fantasies of subjugating women, and, indeed, Nikkatsu's heroines are often socially oppressed as strippers, prostitutes and barmaids, or sexually oppressed as housewives, teachers, and office workers. However, a number of Nikkatsu productions could be interpreted as feminist films because of their depiction of strong women who spiritually dominate men" (412).

15. Making the central character the ruthless manager of a hard-core video company was no doubt a sideswipe at the industry that was putting Nikkatsu out of the porn business. At the same time, like Kumashiro's other less than pleasant characters, Yoichi is not a one-dimensional villain.
16. *Twisted Path of Love* was Kumashiro's own favorite among his films. Clips from it appear on TV sets in *Loves Bites Back* and *Like a Rolling Stone*.
17. Hélène Raymond (in *La petite ourse*, www.fluctuat.net, n.d.) generalizes Kumashiro's recognition of women's eroticism both sharply and lyrically: "Unlike phallic eroticism or pleasure [*jouissance*], which Lacan sums up in a brilliant formula as the pleasure of an idiot, Kumashiro enables us to feel our way into the boundless limbo of vaginal pleasure." (My translation.)

Abstract William Johnson: "A New View of Porn: The Films of Tatsumi Kumashiro." Tatsumi Kumashiro (1927-1995) became a leading maker of Japanese soft-core porn films in the 1970s and 1980s. Because he aimed to make films whose interest ranged beyond sexual arousal, his work sheds new light on the debate over screen pornography. This study examines several of his films and shows the distinctiveness of his approach.

Kim Magowan

"Blood Only Means What You Let It"

John Sayles's *Lone Star* (1996) was a commercial success, a critics' favorite, and an Oscar nominee (for best screenplay); it has also generated more scholarship than his other films. These successes are all the more impressive when one considers how subversive *Lone Star* is: the film advocates a romantic relationship that proves to be incestuous. Although a number of recent films take on the subject of incest, including *Voyager (Homo Faber), The House of Yes, The Cement Garden, Spanking the Monkey*, *The Weight of Water*, *Gladiator*, and *The Sweet Hereafter*. *Lone Star* creates a situation in which incest does not have the usual tragic consequences. While many reviewers and critics have considered the movie's sophisticated racial politics, none has closely examined how Sayles succeeds in partially legitimizing incest via those racial politics.[1]

Sayles combines incest, society's most ubiquitous taboo, with miscegenation in ways that simultaneously nod to cultural tradition and break from it. *Lone Star* revisits and radically revises a narrative of sexual transgression that is particularly associated with the American South. In 1854, a Mississippian slavery apologist named Henry Hughes pronounced in his *Treatise on Sociology* that "Amalgamation is incest."[2] This paradox is explored by a number of American artists, most notably William Faulkner,[3] who represent interracial sex as literally incest, the object of desire as simulta-

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Above, from far left: Elizabeth Peña as Pilar Cruz, Matthew McConaughey as Buddy Deeds, Kris Kristofferson as Charley Wade, and Chris Cooper as Sam Deeds

Incest and Miscegenation in John Sayles's *Lone Star*

neously the racial Other and the biological brother. By setting *Lone Star* in Frontera, a Texas border town, Sayles leaves behind the racial binary of the South, predicated on the residue of a slave economy, for a terrain in which binaries and taboos still circulate, but have lost their life-and-death force. As both quintessentially American (the terrain of John Wayne movies) and also famously iconoclastic (the Lone Star state), Texas operates for Sayles as a mini-America, a perfect setting for representing national culture conflict. As Sayles explains, "One of the reasons I chose Texas for this thing is because the state of Texas has a compressed history that is like a metaphor for the history of the United States."[4] In this way, *Lone Star* can be seen as an updating of American race wars, mapping out new frontiers for racial border disputes.

The multicultural population of *Lone Star*'s Frontera facilitates not only the threat of miscegenation, but also the fact of it. The multiplicity of miscegenation and racial hybridity in the film demystifies miscegenation of much of its force. This is not to suggest that miscegenation ceases to operate as a taboo, but to propose that the border between races has become, to use a term from *Lone Star*, "fuzzy." Not only is the miscegenation taboo relaxed in *Lone Star*, but this very relaxation serves as a vehicle for legitimizing incest. Sayles recuperates not just miscegenation as a sexual choice but incest as well, by proposing that the same

logic that prohibits or enables the one also does so with the other. He articulates a careful optimism, in which the prohibitions regulating *both* taboos become subjective, and consequently negotiable. *Lone Star* represents sexual transgression as up for grabs. It maps just how far (and of course I use the expression deliberately) characters are willing to go.

Knowing Place

Lone Star is a murder mystery that spans more than 40 years in flashbacks. The protagonist is Sam Deeds, the town sheriff, who investigates the murder of Charley Wade. A bigoted, bribe-taking, and homicidal former sheriff of Frontera, Wade disappeared 40 years ago. His remains are discovered in the desert at the beginning of the movie. Sam suspects that Wade was murdered by Sam's father, Buddy Deeds, whose public rift with Wade is a local legend, and who served as Frontera's sheriff between Wade's tenure and Sam's own. To Frontera, Buddy is a mythic icon. But Sam has a much more complicated relationship with his father, whom he has been unable to forgive for separating him from his high-school girlfriend, Pilar. Sam assumes that his father's prohibition was motivated by racism, as Pilar is Chicana. While working to solve the murder, Sam reignites his relationship with Pilar. At the end of the film, Sam uncovers two secrets: first, that Wade's killer is Hollis Pogue, Frontera's present-day mayor and a former deputy of Wade's. Hollis shot Wade to keep him from murdering Otis, an African-American bartender, and Hollis, Buddy, and Otis collaborated in a cover-up plan, burying Wade's body. Second, Sam discovers that Buddy had a long-standing adulterous relationship with a Mexican immigrant, Mercedes Cruz, and that Pilar is their child. Prohibition of incest, and not miscegenation, motivated Buddy's severing of Sam's relationship with Pilar. The star that crosses Sayles's lovers is thus not "lone" at all. Despite this revelation, Sam and Pilar decide to stay together—a crucial twist on the archetypal incest narrative.

Lone Star opens with two army officers, Sergeant Cliff Potts and Sergeant Mikey Hogan, scouring a desert terrain that, many years ago, was the army camp's shooting range. The officers' separate explorations (Cliff is studying plant life, Mikey is searching for bullet shells, which he uses to make sculptures) lead them to the skeleton of Charley Wade. But before Mikey makes the find and calls Cliff's attention to it, Cliff good-naturedly grouses over Mikey's ignorance about his natural surroundings: "Man knows a hundred-fifty varieties of beer, he can't tell a poinsettia from a prickly pear. . . . You live in a place, you should know something about it."[5]

Knowing one's place has multiple registers in *Lone Star*, with class and racial implications as well as spatial ones. Racist Charley Wade uses violence to force Chicanos and African Americans into the site he relegates as their "place." Otis, the owner of a roadhouse patronized by African Americans, describes Wade's tactics to Sam in a scene dramatized by a flashback. After threatening young Otis at gun point, Wade tells him, "You learn to act your place, son. This isn't Houston" (151). Wade's formulation of "learn[ing] . . . place" underscores Cliff's parallel formulation of knowing place: place becomes a thing which can be cognitively mapped. Here, Wade overlaps two kinds of "place": class, as he violently insists on Otis's subordination; and geography. Houston, in Wade's representation, is a place where African Americans can behave out of place: not Frontera. As Wade says to Otis of Houston, "I hear they let you boys run wild up there" (150). Wade's reordering of African-American "place" is further demonstrated by his intrusion into the roadhouse, a space which Otis characterizes as the "one place in this town [African Americans] feel welcome" (167). Before teaching Otis his proper "place," Wade forces the club to evacuate: "You people clear out of here! Now!" (151). He thus literally as well as symbolically expels African Americans from their chosen place. When figures stray from their consigned place—when, for instance, Eladio Cruz, Pilar's alleged father, transports immigrants across the border without Wade's sanction—Wade makes them pay. He kills Eladio for "run[ning] his own operation 'thout any help" (196), and only his own death prevents Wade from murdering Otis for "runnin' numbers without I know about it" (149). Wade's solution for this kind of unauthorized mobility, signified by his characterization of Eladio's and Otis's illicit activities both involving "runnin,'" is to force transgressors into a yet more confining place. As one old-timer, Fenton, says, "Charley Wade were known to have put a good number of people in the *ground*" (123).

Fenton's passive construction—Wade's murders "were known"—exposes a further level in these negotiations between epistemology, physical site, and social position that activate the film's formulation of "knowing place." For Frontera is a fundamentally knowing place. The plot of *Lone Star* is literally about plots: the plot of Buddy Deeds, Otis, and Hollis to

hide Hollis's murder of Charley Wade; and the plot of Buddy Deeds and Mercedes Cruz to conceal their adulterous relationship and the fact that it has produced a daughter. Similarly, the cover-up deployed by Buddy, Otis, and Hollis is literally a covering up, as they collaborate to put Wade's body in the ground. Implicated in these cover-up plots is the community, which has known all along truths about Buddy that Sam only painstakingly discovers. As Sam belatedly realizes, "For 15 years the whole damn town knew [Buddy] had another woman on the side" (237). Unlike Sam, Frontera's citizens are in the know; and their warnings to Sam not to seek knowledge involve metaphors that once again enact links between knowing and place. As a Native-American merchant named Wesley Birdsong cautions Sam, "Gotta be careful *where* you're pokin'—who *knows* what you'll find" (202, my emphasis).[6] Otis echoes Wesley when he says to Sam, "People start digging holes in this county, and there's no telling what'll come up" (236). Of course it's crucial that the verb Otis employs is "telling," not knowing. He knows perfectly well what will surface through such digging; he was one of the three men who placed Wade's body underground. What he resists, until the end, is "telling."

What the community does tell Sam is a combination of half-truths and hermeneutic codes which Sam lacks the knowledge to interpret until the end of the film. For instance, community members tell him, "Your mother was a saint" (124, 188), but what they mean by that—that Muriel Deeds put up with Buddy's adulterous relationship for years—eludes him. The "whole damn town" may have been aware of Buddy's love affair with Mercedes Cruz, but excluded from this epistemological loop are the children of the illicit lovers. Sam's and Pilar's ignorance, which they share with the audience, lies in pointed contrast to Frontera's suppressed knowledge. Thus, among the things uniting Sam and Pilar—attraction, love, a mysterious sense of natural connection that they only come to understand at the end—is their mutual ignorance of Pilar's origin. They have always been outside the borders of Frontera's knowledge, which makes their decision to stay together in spite of communal prohibitions against incest considerably easier. By doing so, they institutionalize an alienation that they have already been allotted. Finally knowing will most likely lead them to leave Frontera for a new place: one in which, one assumes, they will usurp the community's role as keepers of the secret about illicit love.

Border Crossing

Frontera, Texas, is an invented multiracial town on the U.S.-Mexico border whose name means "border." Sayles describes *Lone Star* as "a story about borders," adding, "In a personal sense, a border is where you draw the line and say, 'This is where I end and somebody else begins.' In a metaphorical sense, it can be any of the symbols we erect against each other—sex, class, race, age."[7] Reviewers of *Lone Star* have echoed Sayles, pointing out the paradoxical centrality in this film of the margin: "Boundaries and lines constitute *Lone Star*'s central theme and the very core of the complex, diverse society Sayles creates."[8] These boundaries take many forms: the U.S.-Mexico border, lines in the sand, walls of glass, and, most crucially, the backdrop of the movie's final scene: a drive-in movie screen with a big hole in its corner. This ripped screen is the film's ultimate contemplation of both the integrity and the permeability of borders. It functions as a self-referential demonstration of how cinema represents sexual transgression, which it simultaneously displays and covers over (screens). Further, by putting such emphasis on spectatorship—the audience of *Lone Star* views a screen depicting two characters viewing a blank, torn screen—Sayles highlights a subjectivity necessarily governing any reflection of and scrutiny about sexual taboo.

By using borders as his controlling trope, Sayles makes explicit a subterranean generic emphasis on borders endemic to whodunits and Westerns, two genres which *Lone Star* overlaps. Laura Mulvey claims that "The detective story is a narrative that carries the hero into another space, a nether world," and characterizes this nether world as "a modern space of liminality."[9] The Western, a film which takes as its setting the frontier, is likewise concerned with borders, though critics have delineated different kinds of boundaries as ones subject to representation and conflict. In what is probably the most important critical study of the genre, Jane Tompkins proposes that the Western both concerns and performs the disciplinary function of patrolling gender boundaries.[10] Other critics, such as J.P. Telotte, locate the border at stake as existing between races: "What the transgressive elements point up is an abiding sense of our culture's limits, demarcations, boundaries . . . transgression and racism intersect, each becoming the shadow existence, as well as the shadow justification, of the other—a key boundary on which the genre depends."[11]

In *Lone Star*, borders are in place, but inadequately so.[12] In his quest to solve Charley Wade's murder, Sam crosses the U.S.-Mexico border to Ciudad León. He visits a Mexican tire salesman named Chucho Montoya, who calls himself "El Rey de las Llantas," the King of Tires. Chucho tells Sam the story of what happened to Eladio Cruz, the man Pilar believes to be her father. Dramatizing Sayles's characterization, "a border is where you draw the line," Chucho draws a line in the sand with a Coca-Cola bottle to indicate the limits of Sam's power. Chucho tells Sam, "Step over this line—*Ay, qué milagro!* You're not the sheriff of nothing anymore—just some *tejano* with a lot of questions I don't have to answer." Having stripped Sam of his authority to ask, Chucho proceeds to answer, and the story he tells is about the arbitrariness of borders. "*Mi amigo* Eladio Cruz is giving some friends of his a lift in his *camión* one day—but because he's on one side of this invisible line and not the other, they got to hide in the back like criminals" (194). Eladio is apprehended and then murdered by Charley Wade. Eladio thus "answers" in the most violent of senses for his transgression, a transgression which is perfectly literal: he is transporting illegal immigrants across the border.

That Chucho introduces his story by drawing a line with a Coca-Cola bottle shows the degree to which he appropriates American cultural icons. The screenplay for *Lone Star* describes Chucho drawing the line with his heel (194), and Sayles's decision to deploy the Coca-Cola bottle instead as the means of designating a border was a very deliberate one. Sayles is referencing the Alamo; as he explains: "The Mexican guy draws a line in the sand, which refers to a famous moment from the history of the Alamo, when Travis drew a line. Of course, the Mexican draws the line with a Coca-Cola bottle, but it is still a line drawn in the sand."[13] Sayles further implies that the Coca-Cola bottle indicates the limits of such subversion. As an explicit representation of the process of "Coca-colanization," the bottle props up the very cultural authority which Chucho purports to challenge. But we might instead read such a gesture as a brilliantly subversive appropriation, just as Chucho appropriates Travis's doomed "last stand": Chucho deploys an icon of American imperialism against itself. Indeed, the capital Chucho has acquired to build his tire "kingdom" was purchased by his labor across the border. Further, the objects he produces cross the border. As he informs Sam, "Lots of your people rollin' back over that bridge in my rubber" (193). Chucho's business success thus revolves around his ability to move commodities (money and tires) over a border whose permeability he knows how to exploit.

Like the U.S.-Mexico border that Chucho designates as an "invisible line" (194), the borders that are figured as coming between characters are both physical and transparent, as Sam's first encounter in the movie with Pilar demonstrates. After 20 years apart, Sam first glimpses Pilar when she comes to pick up her son Amado from jail. When Sam sees Pilar, multiple barricades come between them. They are separated by the barred grille of the jail's information desk, and by walls of glass. The "invisible line" of glass, introduced here, is repeatedly erected between these lovers as a border whose transparency indicates a potential for crossing. As she drives her children to school, Pilar glimpses Sam through her car window, and becomes transfixed. Later, Sam sits in his car, gazing at Pilar at work through a double border of glass: his windshield and the barred window of her classroom. These glass barricades are both tangible and negotiable. They don't prevent the former lovers from locking eyes.

This kind of inadequate border—inadequate because it doesn't sufficiently divide people—causes certain members of the Frontera community considerable anxiety. A redneck bartender named Cody complains to Sam:

> We are in state of crisis. The lines of demarcation has gotten fuzzy—to run a successful civilization, you got to have lines of demarcation between right and wrong, between this one and that one—your Daddy understood that. He was like the whatchacallit—the referee for this damn *menudo* we got down here. He understood how most people don't want their salt and sugar in the same jar (162-63).

Cody's misgivings about "fuzzy" borders do not stop him from contributing rhetorically to that problematic fuzziness. His metaphor about salt and sugar in the same jar is a case in point: why not salt and pepper? Salt and sugar look the same, cannot be so easily separated.[14] Sam's retort, "You mixed drinks bad as you mix metaphors, you be out of a job" (163), underscores that, for all his interest in erecting firmer "lines of demarcation," what Cody rhetorically deploys instead is "mix[ing]." The cross-purposes between Cody's argument and his articulation of it, the way his language works to confuse rather than to separate, expresses itself in a tirade which Sayles chose to include in the film, though not the screenplay. Cody rails to Sam, "*Se habla* American here, goddammit." Indeed, "American," and not English, is precisely what Cody must speak, particularly in this border town, where even rednecks need to have some proficiency in Spanish, and

paradoxically defend their nativism with a cross-lingual mixing.

Cody may want to erect borders "between right and wrong, between this one and that one"—another kind of blurring between values and people which for him contains logic, since "this one," "here," and white (as opposed to "that one," "over there," and Chicano or African American) are implicitly "right." Indeed, "right" is a perfect adjective for Cody to employ, in its multiple meanings of morality, conservatism, and spatial designation. But such lines of demarcation are tricky ones to draw in the sand. Another bartender, Cody's African-American counterpoint Otis, insists on such fuzziness to his estranged son, Del, telling him, "There's not like a borderline between the good people and the bad people—you're not either on one side or the other" (168). Buddy in particular gets reinterpreted by his son as being both less culpable (not a murderer, not a racist) and more culpable (an adulterer) than Sam originally assumed. It is beside borders and in interaction with borders—the U.S.-Mexico border, the Rio Grande River, the ruptured movie screen which comprises the setting of the film's final scene—that characters reveal to which side of moral and social balances they tip. Along the borderline, Charley Wade exposes the full measure of his brutality, killing illegal border-crosser Eladio Cruz; Mercedes Cruz shows a hitherto hidden compassion for the plight of illegal immigrants by rescuing such transgressors; and Sam and Pilar resolve to become border-crossers themselves.

The Melting Pot as *Menudo*: Miscegenation

While Sam and Pilar constitute the movie's central example of an interracial couple, sexual border-crossing occurs repeatedly in *Lone Star*, in several permutations. Instances of interracial coupling include the two army officers, white Cliff Potts and his African-American girlfriend Priscilla; Cliff's officer friend, Mikey Hogan, and his Japanese ex-wife; and Buddy Deeds and Mercedes Cruz. Miscegenation is an integral part of the Frontera community, generating much of its population. For instance, Otis's ancestor is John Horse, who is both African American and Native American. Sayles's casting choices further confirm Frontera's character as a hybrid community: Otis's wife, Carolyn, for example, is visibly biracial. In *Lone Star*, racial hybridity becomes a new norm for American identity. Because miscegenation is so ubiquitous, it is difficult to police.

Of these many interracial couples, Cliff Potts and Priscilla may afford the most telling commentary on ways miscegenation in Frontera is pervasive and yet painstakingly concealed. Priscilla first speaks in the film during a scene in which she and Cliff interrogate a private named Athena Johnson about a violent incident which occurred in Otis's roadhouse: a former boyfriend of Athena's shot a soldier with whom she was dancing. Priscilla reprimands Athena: "We're not running a dating service here" (144). She thus expresses her authority over the soldier as a sexual policing, which she reiterates later to Cliff: "I'm the one in charge of her sorry ass" (144). But Priscilla's regulation of Athena's sexuality, and her insistence that the army is no place for it, is patently hypocritical, given that we later learn she is dating Cliff, a fellow officer. Like Buddy Deeds, who regulates his son's sexuality and yet himself is an adulterous miscegenator, Priscilla attempts to hold Athena to standards of sexual conduct which she herself has violated. Indeed, her regulation of Athena functions as a means of hiding her relationship with Cliff, whom she is reluctant to marry, and whose public displays of affection she bans: "No PDAs, no necking on the obstacle course" (163).

When Cliff discusses with his friend and fellow officer Mikey Hogan his plans to marry Priscilla, they have this telling exchange:

> MIKEY: You met her family? They gonna be cool about you being a white guy?
>
> CLIFF: Priscilla says they think any woman over 30 who isn't married must be a lesbian. She figures they'll be so relieved that I'm a man. . . .
>
> MIKEY: Always heartwarming to see a prejudice defeated by a deeper prejudice (172).

The taboo against difference (miscegenation) is eradicated by the "deeper" taboo against sameness (homosexuality). But what happens when sexual sameness and difference are both in play, as is the case with Sam and Pilar?[15] Buddy Deeds, himself a miscegenator, screens his true motivation for banning Sam's relationship with Pilar—the fact that it is incest—by enforcing prohibitions against miscegenation. As described by Mikey's formulation, sameness is the deeper prejudice, and Buddy buries it as systematically as he buries Charley Wade's corpse. He hides sameness by emphasizing difference.

Miscegenation, and particularly forms of miscegenation involving and producing African-American bodies, serves as a subtle commentary on Sam and

Pilar's as yet undisclosed kinship later in the movie as well. Talking to his grandson Chet for the first time, Otis Payne informs Chet about their mixed-race ancestor, John Horse. Chet asks Otis, "So I'm part Indian?" Otis replies, "By blood you are. But blood only means what you let it" (216). Otis thus situates "blood" as epistemological rather than ontological. Blood possesses symbolic valence: it "means." But that meaning is subject to conscious regulation: "Blood only means what *you* let it" (my emphasis). By shifting the burden of assigning meaning from the community to the individual, Otis forecasts the dilemma Sam and Pilar confront at the end of *Lone Star*. Sam and Pilar must decide what the revelation of their blood tie will mean to them. In their mutual resolve to stay together in spite of their knowledge that their relationship is incestuous, they refuse to let blood mean what society proclaims it should. Indeed, what Sam and Pilar "let" blood mean amounts to a kind of blood-letting, an evacuation of blood and the meaning accorded to it.[16] These two exchanges, "Always heartwarming to see a prejudice defeated by a deeper prejudice" and "Blood only means what you let it," emphasize that sexual taboo is subject to interpretation, to meaning that can be revised—even, in Mikey's language, "defeated."

Ripping Through Taboo

In the final scene of *Lone Star*, Pilar approaches Sam as he sits on the hood of his car gazing at the dilapidated, ruptured screen of a drive-in movie. It is before the border that this screen demarcates that Sam tells Pilar (and the viewer) her secret history, which he has only very recently learned himself. He informs Pilar that her real father is Buddy Deeds, not her mother's dead husband, Eladio Cruz, and that their relationship is thus more illicit than ever, incestuous as well as miscegenating. Here, in the final moments of the film, the lovers have to make a decision:

> *A silence, both of them wondering what the next move should be.*
>
> PILAR: So that's it? You're not going to want to be with me any more?
>
> *Sam knows what he feels but doesn't have the words.*
>
> PILAR: I'm not having any more children. After Amado, I had some complications—I can't get pregnant again, if that's what the rule is about. . . .
>
> SAM: If I met you for the first time today, I'd still want to be with you.
>
> *It's what Pilar needed to hear.*
>
> PILAR: We start from scratch. . . .
>
> SAM: Yeah.
>
> PILAR: Everything that went before, all that stuff, all that history—the hell with it, right?
>
> *Pilar takes Sam's hand, kisses him.*
>
> PILAR: Forget the Alamo.
>
> *Wide shot of drive-in. Sam and Pilar sit by each other holding hands, looking at the empty screen* (242-44).

Sam's and Pilar's decision to stay together after all, in spite of the fact that their relationship is incestuous, constitutes the most radical twist this film offers on the incest and miscegenation narrative. Confronted with the combination of incest and miscegenation, Faulkner's Henry Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* chooses to kill; Sam and Pilar choose each other. While Faulkner addresses the impossibility of escaping the past, the last line of *Lone Star*, "Forget the Alamo," suggests that the past can be jettisoned.[17] Such a rejection of the claims of the past seems intended to signify a new hope, a break with tradition as well as with narrative precedents which doom transgressive characters to coffins. An early review of *Lone Star*, titled "The Prophet of Hope," certainly wants to read the conclusion positively, and other critics, reviewers, and Sayles himself have followed suit in this optimism.[18] But with this new hope comes a degree of perhaps unappreciated complication.

The movie concludes with a long-shot of the lovers facing the movie screen—a highly self-referential way for a film to end. Emma Pérez proposes that "the blank screen in front of [Sam and Pilar] represents newness,"[19] but, as its dilapidated condition should signal, the screen has a more ambiguous function. The drive-in movie setting is an emotionally intense site for these two lovers, as it marks paradoxically the scene for their most explicit connection—this is where they met as teenagers to have sex—and also their separation. It is here that Buddy, years earlier, invaded their space, pulling his son out of the car and Pilar's arms, and sending his (illegitimate, unacknowledged) daughter home. The movie playing as Buddy separates the teenage lovers is *Black Mama, White Mama* (1973).[20] This film's plot concerns two female convicts—one black, one white—who escape from prison. The fugi-

tives are only able to mount their escape, their own version, like Eladio Cruz and Otis, of unauthorized "running," while manacled together. Thus it is a movie that represents both flight and bondage, states that in this context operate explicitly in tandem. The drive-in movie screen constitutes a kind of ground zero of paired, literally linked, binaries: it displays a black woman and white woman attached by a chain; it is the place where Sam and Pilar both connect and separate.[21]

As a tabula rasa, the screen thus represents a deeply problematic starting line from which to launch the new beginning Sam and Pilar hope for. The screen cannot help but refer to a past which they want to discard. Its status as a visual Proustian madeleine, as déjà vu incarnate, renders Pilar's request to "Forget the Alamo" a poignant delusion. The lovers agree to "start from scratch" (244), but their attempts to articulate a fresh start expose a troubled and troubling inability to follow through on their intent to cut off the past. For instance, Sam reassures Pilar, "If I met you for the first time today, I'd still want to be with you" (244). That "still," of course, undoes the logic of the claim, confirming a continuation of Sam's feeling, and thus a connection to, rather than a break from, the past.

Otis may contend that "blood only means what you let it," but the tenacious way the past always resurfaces in *Lone Star* undermines the possibility of starting from scratch, or forgetting the Alamo. Indeed, one of the striking technical features of the film, and one noted by critics and reviewers,[22] is the way Sayles shifts from past (flashback) to present in seamless transitions. Alain Robbe-Grillet points out that cinematic images are always experienced by viewers as present, so the "past" must be evoked by narrative conventions.[23] Yet Sayles deliberately avoids deploying any of the standard film techniques, such as dissolves, to signal that a boundary in time has been crossed. The past and present combine in the same shot. A significant example of this seamless transition between past and present occurs between the flashback scene in which Charley Wade murders Eladio Cruz, and the narrative present. Sayles's camera focuses on Wade's boots as he walks across the bridge, looking for witnesses to his homicide. Next we see Chucho, hiding under the bridge and looking fearfully up at those boots. The camera then pans upwards to reveal not Wade but Sam, standing in the same spot and trying to visualize Chucho's story. Of this and similar scenes, Sayles says, "I wanted the past, those stories about his father, to be so much more present than when you play the harp and do a lap dissolve. . . . A cut is very much a tear. You use a cut to say there's a separation between this thing and that thing. And so in *Lone Star*, I didn't even want a dissolve, which is a soft cut."[24] A dissolve, as Sayles characterizes it here, might mark another example of fuzzy borders. By employing panning shots in place of dissolves, Sayles indicates that the border between the present and the past is not just "fuzzy." It has entirely collapsed.

Lone Star is full of images of and anxieties about borders, the temptation to cross the border coupled with the danger of such crossing. One place a border does not exist, however, though it is longed for, is between the present and the past. Like Cody, Sam and Pilar resolve to erect "firmer lines of demarcation" between their future and their past. But no wishful rhetoric will undo the fact that this border is missing, and the audience sees its absence. Pilar and Sam may be able to leave the Frontera community that knows all about them and will certainly continue in its efforts to keep them apart; they will not be able to abandon Pilar's teenage children. The only way for Sam and Pilar to maintain their incestuous relationship will be to lie to her children, just as their own parents lied to them about their relationship. Thus, their wish to "start from scratch" is rendered problematic because, in order to do so, they will have to repeat the history of transgression, deception, and cover-ups that they want to forget.

The noteworthy detail about the physical condition of the drive-in movie screen is the big hole in its upper left corner. Sam's "poking," to use Wesley Birdsong's terminology, leads him at the end of *Lone Star* to contemplate a screen which has been poked through, and which he both sees and sees through. Like the glass borders which come between Pilar and Sam but don't prevent them from locking eyes, this screen is another ruptured border whose openness invites the possibility of transgression. As lovers who now plan to proceed in their transgressive relationship with open eyes, Sam and Pilar will most likely make the choice that Hollis, Buddy, and Otis do: to cover up. But their capacity to do so is challenged by the screen's rupture, its inability to screen them fully. The hole in the screen thus indicates that the border Pilar and Sam contemplate can be transgressed, but also suggests that such transgression cannot be concealed. The lovers in this scene are torn; the stage direction has them "*wondering what the next move should be*" (243). The torn screen is an objective correlative of their ambivalence.

Perched on the hood of a motionless car, the lovers are precariously on the fence. At this crisis point Pilar offers information that makes it possible for them to decide to be together instead of to reject each other. She

announces that she is sterile, a disclosure which finally enables Sam to commit to her. What Pilar does, in effect, is locate a loophole in the incest taboo. She argues that her sterility opens a potential for incestuous border-crossing. Since the biological foundation for "the rule" doesn't apply, Pilar proposes that the rule is violable.[25] In an interview, Sayles confirms Pilar's rationalization:

> Their children won't be born with a pig's tail[26] because, as Pilar says, "I can't get pregnant again." One of the things I wanted to do with that is ask, "O.K., what actually is that rule?" I'm interested in the difference between when people do things because of good practical and emotional human reasons, and when they're just following rules. So here are Sam and Pilar—they were raised separately, they're adults now, there's no question of one being the older brother or older sister and in some kind of position of power over the other one, so it's fairly equal in that way. They're not going to have children, so they're not going to pass on any horrendous birth defects, so what is that rule about? . . . What they're left with is the realization that, "O.K., we have a chance to do something that is going to be seen as enormously antisocial but it's good for us," and they choose to cross that border of moral opinion.[27]

Sayles here authorizes his lovers' subversive choice of incest, bequeathing to them an imperative of love which supersedes arbitrary social taboo, "just following rules"; and his explicit language of transgression, "they choose to cross the border," alludes again to the perforated movie screen. For, if that screen is the final border in this film abounding with representations of borders, the hole in it embodies the loophole Pilar proposes and Sayles reiterates.[28]

In a compelling article concerning an oft-repeated scene in the Western in which white men prepare to kill white women in order to "save" them from being raped by Indians, J.P. Telotte discusses what he calls "the 'loophole' potential." Referring to Michelle Burnham's interpretation of captivity narratives—a genre which details the lives of white women who survived such miscegenating violations—Telotte writes,

> Such narratives . . . both confirmed the savagery of the Indian other and offered intriguing glimpses of life as part of that other. In effect, they often seemed both to confirm the dominant racial and cultural identity of the audience and to offer what Burnham terms a "loophole" (15), a possible alternative to that cultural construction.[29]

Significantly, Telotte and Burnham both link "the loophole potential" to sexual transgression: miscegenation opens the possibility of "intriguing glimpses" of the "other," instigating a rupture in the screen through which one can look. As Burnham explains, "loophole" has two meanings: it refers to a chink through which a spectator can gaze, and a means through which someone can transgress a law without actually breaking it. Thus, the term "loophole" sets up an equation between the spectator who looks through a loophole, and the transgressor who goes through one.[30] Since Sam and Pilar will not be able to, in Sayles's words, "pass on any horrendous birth defects," they can pass through the border of the incest prohibition, though only by leaving Frontera and passing themselves off, in a new community and to her children, as an interracial, and not incestuous, couple. Like Buddy, they will collaborate in a cover-up. They hope to patch the hole that is the film's trope for knowledge acquisition, as it is the hole that "digging" (in Otis's language) and "poking" (in Wesley Birdsong's language) create.

Lone Star, like the lovers, cannot start from scratch; amalgamation is incest here, as it is in Faulkner, who proves in the conflation he initiates between incest and miscegenation that the Other "is" literally the brother, the different "is" the same. Where *Lone Star* truly does carve its own territory is in its ending. Unlike Oedipus, or Faulkner's Charles Bon, Pilar and Sam survive unscathed. Furthermore, their sexual relationship survives. Sayles's choice to conclude his film with a self-referential shot of a movie screen might be read as an ironic commentary, an acknowledgment of the artificiality that enables such a happy ending to take place. The screen reminds us that this is, after all, a movie, and that such endings might happen in Hollywood, but not in real life. The fact that the audience nonetheless roots for this ending, that we want Pilar and Sam to make the choice they do, springs from Sayles's creation of a loophole which makes the taboo violable. For all its radical endorsement of sustaining a knowingly incestuous relationship, *Lone Star* divests the incest taboo of much of its power by perforating the biological imperative underlying it. Incest, like miscegenation, gets recast by Sayles as a social prejudice, a "rule" open to question.[31] Incest becomes

an epistemological rather than an ontological problem. By leaving Frontera, the community in the know, Sam and Pilar can limit to themselves the sphere of knowledge that prohibits and regulates their relationship. Incest will only mean what Sam and Pilar "let" it mean; they can replace the community as agents of interpretation.

Writing about royal incest and the ritual prohibitions against it, René Girard theorizes, "Incest, then, is simply another aspect of the affliction that the rites are designed to prevent. But they attempt to prevent it by means of a cure that is intimately associated with the most virulent form of the affliction. The ritualistic mind thus finds itself obliged to separate what cannot be separated, and the solution must be an arbitrary one."[32] Girard is discussing here the need to sacrifice the incestuous perpetrator, but his analysis might apply as well to miscegenating incest, which also functions to "separate what cannot be separated." Girard contends that "incest is unintelligible without reference to sacrifice,"[33] and in Faulkner, the sacrifices demanded to expiate incest and miscegenation are profound. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Henry Sutpen, as imagined by Quentin and Shreve, murders his brother because he decides he can tolerate incest, but not miscegenation. Faulkner suggests that within a racist society committed to upholding a myth of prohibitive difference, incest becomes excusable, because it is preferable to miscegenation. Faulkner does not as an author excuse incest, however; he represents that excusability, incest's status as a lesser sin in relation to miscegenation, as a function of racism. As Mikey puts it in *Lone Star*, the taboo against incest is "defeated" by the "deeper" prejudice against miscegenation. Thus, Faulkner attacks the rule against miscegenation by dramatizing the incest-authorizing lengths to which characters will go to in order to keep the rule in place, the fiction law.

Sayles goes much further. Faulkner represents the prohibition against miscegenation as a rule open to question; Sayles represents the prohibition against incest as an open rule. What is radical about *Lone Star* is that incest, culture's most unilateral taboo, becomes under certain strict parameters acceptable, even advisable. We are conditioned to have an antipathy towards incest, and so, for an audience to overcome that reflexive queasiness, and to welcome Pilar's and Sam's decision to continue a knowingly incestuous relationship, Sayles must work to relax the incest taboo. A major method of relaxing it is his dispensing of the biological imperative behind incest. But another, more subtle means is the way Sayles couples incest with miscegenation. To a late-twentieth-century audience, the film's painstaking representation of miscegenation as an irrational taboo which is nonetheless strenuously enforced might seem dated, over-determined; but there is a purpose behind it. The challenges to miscegenation ultimately operate as challenges to incest. Miscegenation is represented throughout *Lone Star* as multiply displayed (screened); as carefully hidden (screened); as fuzzy; and, most crucially, as subjective. The subjectivity embedded in miscegenation, made explicit in Otis's formulation, "Blood only means what you let it," works to dismantle the taboo against incest. Like miscegenation, incest is now recast as a dubious taboo. *Lone Star* pressures the audience to ask, as Sayles and Pilar do, "What is that rule about?" It proposes avenues "about," around, and through incest.

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Notes

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1. Geoffrey Bakewell does consider incest in *Lone Star* more than just in passing, emphasizing the film's parallels to *Oedipus Rex*. Geoffrey W. Bakewell, "Oedipus Tex: *Lone Star*, Tragedy, and Postmodernism," *Classical and Modern Literature*, vol. 22, no.1 (2002): 35-48.
2. Henry Hughes, *Treatise on Sociology, Theoretical and Practical* (1854; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 140.
3. In particular, there are many parallels between *Lone Star* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). The plots of both are generated by historically removed violence (40-year-old murder mysteries). Attempts to demystify these murders expose domestic skeletons rather than out-of-doors ones, as the detective quests unearth long-buried family secrets. Like Faulkner, Sayles exposes the attempt to mask over an intimate kinship between different races with a myth of prohibitive "difference," a myth enforced by policing miscegenation. Finally, the plots of sexual transgression in both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Lone Star* are accompanied with and represented by a symbolic order situated around borders.

4. John Sayles and Gavin Smith, *Sayles on Sayles* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 232. Sayles's language is worth some scrutiny: Texas's history is "like a metaphor for the history," a simile of a metaphor for a story; it is a thrice-removed representation of national reality. In another interview, Sayles points out, "American culture is not monolingual or monoracial. It's always been a mix." That mixing is particularly endemic to Texas, which shows why Sayles would choose Texas as his metaphor for America. Dennis West and Joan M. West, "Borders and Boundaries: An Interview with John Sayles," *Cineaste*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1996): 15.
5. John Sayles, *Men with Guns & Lone Star* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 108. All other references to *Lone Star* will be taken from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically within the text. Quotations from *Lone Star* which do not include page numbers indicate that I am quoting directly from the film, which has either altered the lines from the screenplay, or added lines which do not appear in it.
6. Wesley's warnings about "poking" also work as a not particularly subtle metaphor about sex. Wesley has just revealed to Sam that Buddy had a woman on the side. Though Wesley refuses to identify the woman, we can assume that Wesley knows Buddy's mistress was Mercedes, and, therefore, that Wesley has good reason to suspect that Pilar is Sam's half-sister. Thus, Wesley might be understood to be warning Sam that Sam doesn't know "where" he's "poking"—Sam has yet to "place" his lover as his sister.
7. "Borders and Boundaries: An Interview with John Sayles," 14.
8. Dennis West and Joan M. West, "Lone Star," *Cineaste*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1996): 36.
9. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 189, 187.
10. Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
11. J.P. Telotte, "A Fate Worse Than Death: Racism, Transgression, and Westerns." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 26, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 120-27.
12. As Joan M. West and Dennis West report in their review of *Lone Star*, "In Frontera barriers are constantly subject to challenge and revision. . . . Changing lines and malleable, leaky barriers are endemic." "Lone Star," 35.
13. "Borders and Boundaries: An Interview with John Sayles," 14.
14. In fact, in their simultaneous embodiment of sameness (in appearance) and difference (in taste), the combined salt and sugar might function as a tidy metaphor about concurrent incest and miscegenation.
15. Homosexuality and incest are similar taboos in that they are both preoccupied with sexual sameness. See Constance Hill Hall, *Incest in Faulkner: A Metaphor for the Fall* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1986), 72. Also see Walter Benn Michaels, who argues, "Another nativist alternative to utopian incest is homosexuality." Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 12.
16. For a meditation on epistemological meanings assigned to blood, see *Our America,* 5, 6, 59.
17. At one point, Sayles considered using "Forget the Alamo" as the title of the film. *Sayles on Sayles*, 219.
18. See Alan A. Stone, "The Prophet of Hope," *Boston Review* (Oct.-Nov. 1996): 20-22. See also José E. Limon's characterization of the "productive forgetfulness" of the ending. José E. Limón, "Tex-Sex-Mex: American Identities, Lone Stars, and the Politics of Racialized Sexuality," *American Literary History*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 613. Emma Pérez reads Pilar's plea to forget the Alamo as a "liberatory moment . . . transcending all that has come before, all that has been inherited only to damage daughters and sons who have fallen heir to a history of conquest, of colonization, of hatred between brown and white." What makes these words hopeful, argues Pérez, is that Pilar, rather than Sam, speaks them: "If Sam had spoken them, I would have walked out of the theater a cynic, disappointed and angry because one more time, a white man was trying to persuade me to forget a history of brutality and move on." Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas Into History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 126.
19. *The Decolonial Imaginary,* 126.
20. *Sayles on Sayles*, 228.
21. Sayles is also referencing Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* (1971), in which the movie theater is the place where the community comes together. *Sayles on Sayle*s, 227-28. Bogdanovich's theater represents both the possibility of connection and the termination of that possibility (the theater closes).
22. See for instance Jack Ryan, who says "the film illustrates William Faulkner's famously accurate assessment of history: 'The past is never dead. It isn't even past.'" Jack Ryan, *John Sayles, Filmmaker* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1998), 215.
23. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 152-53.
24. *Sayles on Sayles*, 230.
25. The biological imperative behind the incest taboo asserts that incest produces genetically degenerate offspring. However, this theory is open to debate. Robin Fox points out that, "inbreeding of domestic animals produces *better* stock. . . . Close inbreeding cannot be condemned in a blanket fashion. It sometimes even helps." Robin Fox, *The Red Lamp of Incest: An Enquiry into the Origins of Mind and Society* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 10.
26. Sayles is referring here to Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), in which the progeny of incest is depicted as biologically deformed, marked with a tail. Aureliano's tail tells the tale of his incestuous parentage.
27. "Borders and Boundaries: An Interview with John Sayles," 16.
28. Next to the drive-in movie screen is a marquee whose remaining letters spell nothing intelligible, but do evoke some interesting possibilities. The pattern of letters is as follows:

    E I
    IN
    CH S X

    My colleague Benjamin Widiss pointed out to me that these letters *almost* spell "incest." To this observation, I

want to add a few remarks: the missing letter—the one whose absence make incest unspellable—is "t," the letter whose appearance evokes a cross(ing). The added letters, "H," "X," and "I," also enable some intriguing combinations. The "X" might be read as a stand-in for the missing "t," in that it is similarly shaped like a cross; yet it emphasizes a crossing which is eroticized (X-rated) and prohibited. The double I's (eyes) suggest a spectatorship essential to this scene which depicts two people gazing at a screen and emphasizes the subjectivity of sexual taboos. "H" and "X" allow the formation of the words "niche" and "sex." Pilar's loophole could be read as carving a "niche" in which the lovers can have sex. Any one of these words can be spelled out (or almost spelled out), but not any two at once, which may suggest what fantasy in *Lone Star* both allows and does not allow, the limits placed upon transgressive possibilities. So, this marquee doesn't spell out a single convincing reading (literally), but it may play with several.

29. "A Fate Worse Than Death: Racism, Transgression, and Westerns," 122, 120. Telotte paraphrases Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, VT: University Press of New England, 1997).
30. *Captivity and Sentiment*, 153, 154.
31. Limón likewise characterizes the incest taboo as an arbitrary "rule": "It remains for [Buddy's] son Sam and his daughter Pilar to movie beyond this dialectic of rule and ambivalence into a greater realm of freedom. . . . For me, there is nothing now in the social order to prevent the legal and moral consummation of their love." Tellingly, Limón adds, "Sayles has to foreclose the possibility of biosocial reproduction, however." "Tex-Sex-Mex: American Identities, Lone Stars, and the Politics of Racialized Sexuality," 612, 614.
32. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (1972; reprint, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 115.
33. Ibid., 112.

Abstract Kim Magowan: "'Blood Only Means What You Let It': Incest and Miscegenation in John Sayles's *Lone Star*." *Lone Star* revises a Southern cultural narrative in which incest and miscegenation, opposite sex taboos, paradoxically enable each other. By conditioning his audience to link the two taboos and to regard the prohibitions regulating each as arbitrary and subjective, John Sayles not only recuperates miscegenation as a sexual choice, but also provocatively endorses incest.

Erratum

The recent review of J.P. Telotte's *Science Fiction Film* (*FQ* 56.4) mistakenly referred to the book as the first in Barry Grant's Genre Series (published by Cambridge University Press); it is in fact the second—it was preceded by Martin Rubin's *Thrillers*.

—Editor

Reviews

After Life

Director/editor/writer: Hirokazu Kore-eda. Producers: Shiho Sato, Masayuki Akieda. Cinematographer: Yutaka Yamazaki. Music: Yasuhiro Kasamatsu. TV Man Union Inc./Celluloid Dreams.

Sometimes the scripts that filmmakers are unable to develop say as much about their aesthetic as any number of deleted scenes rescued from the cutting floor of their completed works. This is particularly true of the Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda, whose first script was based on a sci-fi film about a submarine trip through the human bloodstream. It was to be a film, Kore-eda recalls, "based on the idea that I'd shrink myself, enter my grandfather's brain and restore his lost memories" (Kore-eda's grandfather died of Alzheimer's when he was a child). The idea of inhabiting another person's mind is often considered to be one of the main stylistic tricks of the sci-fi genre—from the point-of-view shots that take us inside James Cameron's various Terminators to the more surrealistic journeys of Spike Jonze's *Being John Malkovich*—yet perhaps the riskiness of possession is what takes us to the cinema in the first place, the dream of shrinking oneself to suddenly become somebody else. In Kore-eda's case, of course, this fantasy is also an act of love motivated by the desire to recover his grandfather's lost memories. Without overstating the link between this obviously autobiographical first script and the more fictional films that have followed it, I think we can read Kore-eda's subsequent career through the terms of his original blueprint: as a series of selfless restoration projects based around the memories of others. For Kore-eda seems to subscribe to the notion that cinematic images are in fact our closest artistic expression of memory. So instead of listening to people remember—what Alfred Hitchcock famously dismissed as a tendency among some directors simply to shoot "photographs of people talking"—Kore-eda gets close to a purer form of cinema that cuts, fades and spurts in line with the human bloodstream.

A graduate of Waseda University, Kore-eda made his name as a documentary filmmaker. His films for television include *Lessons from a Calf* (1990), *However* (1991), *August Without Him* (1994), and *Without Memory* (1996). After the collapse of the major studios in Japan, it was perhaps the easiest way into filmmaking at the beginning of the 1990s. In all of his

Members of *After Life*'s resident band in front of a memory of flying

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. . . thinking about
a choice of memory

documentaries, Kore-eda looks at the role of memory in shaping a person's life and the extent to which afterlife can be achieved through other people's reminiscences. In *August Without Him*, for instance, a film crew focuses on the final years of the first man in Japan to admit to contracting HIV as a result of homosexual contact. Yet the taboo addressed by the film relates not to the sexual life of the nation but to the ambiguous position of the documentary crew commemorating one man's life as he loses his memory. In a postmodern age that increasingly depends on parody and repetition to provide its cultural fixes, Kore-eda's concerns are fundamentally old-fashioned, some might say irrelevant. How do we measure human happiness? Is memory more fictive than real? How do we experience cinematic images?

Such questions are often posed in contemporary cinema, but rarely come together in the same film. It happens in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, although we are talking here about a film now over 20 years old. Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000) might also be discussed in similar terms, though the film seems to miss Allen's and Kore-eda's understated sense of humor. This makes Kore-eda's willingness to address intellectual problems in each of his three feature films to date all the more daring and unusual. For while critics regularly liken his work to Japanese stylists such as Yasujiro Ozu, perhaps a more appropriate comparison is Frank Capra, or even Alfred Hitchcock, both of whom, exactly like Kore-eda, smuggled out difficult material under cover of apparently folksy plots. This is not to deny the presence of other influences in Kore-eda's work. He himself has acknowledged the example of Hou Hsiao-Hsien and the documentary filmmakers Ogawa Shinsuke and Tsuchimoto Noriaki.

Kore-eda's second feature film, *After Life* (1998), pays obvious homage to Capra (its Japanese title, *Wonderful Life*, acknowledges as much). The film spans one week in a way-station between this life and the next. Every Monday, the recently deceased arrive in Limbo to select one memory to take with them to eternity, a memory that is then filmed toward the end of the week as an aid to recollection. Limbo is set on the edge of a city in what looks like an abandoned school surrounded by an untended garden. Left deliberately sparse inside, it seems to function as a waiting place in several ways: as somewhere for the dead to think in peace; as a playhouse in which the camera can linger; and as a dead space of corridors and rooms which viewers inevitably fill with their own memories. Kore-eda, as he does in his first film, *Maborosi* (1995), frequently empties the frame of people. Scenes often begin in a recently inhabited room or a still echoing stairwell, the camera always a few seconds too early or late to catch a character close up. In a film about limbo it is perhaps fitting to leave the audience in a state of expectation too.

Upon arrival, the dead are allocated counselors whose job it is to guide them to select a single memory. The counselors also double as location scouts and production assistants, since in order to recreate memories forever, they first have to film them. As on a film set, the dead have just a few days to prepare their lines and scenes. Rehearsals begin on Thursdays. On Fridays the films are made, and on Saturdays the mem-

ories are screened and the dead move out of Limbo. As with most film productions, the memory-making process is a collaborative one. It is likely that Kore-eda is making a point about auteur theories here: if Limbo doubles as a metaphor for how cinema is created, both these worlds would appear to work best along civil service lines—with a coordinator or director delegating responsibility. In *After Life*, the affable Kennosuke Nakamura (Kei Tani) allocates clients, chairs meetings, and even screens rushes. But most of the hands-on work is done by three male counselors, Kawashima (Susumo Terajima), Sugie (Takashi Naito), and Mochizuki (Arata), the latter assisted by a female trainee, Shiori Satonaka (Erika Oda). There is also a support staff of designers, handymen, and technicians, and even a makeshift band. Although a sprinkling of otherworldly props remains in the film—the snow that never sticks and the projection room that literally projects the dead to heaven—Kore-eda makes his philosophical points gently. Drama always comes first, intellectual speculation second.

A good example of Kore-eda's balancing of story and symbol comes halfway through the film, when Shiori leaves the confines of the house to begin "location scouting." Shiori has an obvious crush on Mochizuki. But in the course of the film, she realizes that he is actually in love with the dead wife of one of their clients, a retired steel company executive called Ichiro Watanabe (Taketoshi Naito). Shiori is a teenager destined never to grow up, a young woman never allowed to move beyond her first crush—leaving her room, she angrily squashes her belongings into her bag, for all the world like a teenager about to leave home. Our empathy with her is thus complicated (perhaps even heightened) by a realization of our own luck. For however haunted we are by early disappointments, the ghosts of our first lovers can at least become just that: spectral presences occasionally encountered in the dark.

Kore-eda has his audience by one of the main hooks of the story, the fairytale-cum-nightmare of living forever with the object of first attraction. Yet it is at this point that the film's universe opens up a little and parallels to the creation of cinema edge in. As Shiori kicks her feet in the garden, Kore-eda frames her despair from the perspective of somebody hiding in the trees, so that our view of her is continually obscured by a series of bamboo trunks. The vertical lines of bamboo are criss-crossed in turn by horizontal slats in the bark, and seen together they seem to slice Shiori in pieces like the edges of a roll of film. So in watching her stumble though the undergrowth with camera in hand looking for the perfect blossom, we at the same time glimpse the filmmaking process—the stitching together of broken-up images to create the illusion of movement. It is at moments like these, when our involvement in Shiori's plight runs alongside our contemplation of cinematic images, that story and symbol coalesce. At plot level, bamboo lines visually imprison Shiori inside the frame as her fate in Limbo binds her to Mochizuki, whilst at the level of metaphor we see the beginning of cinema as dead photographs whirr into life. Or, to put it another way, isn't this an example of life becoming art before us, what one of the characters in the film pinpoints as the human need to turn memories into images? Kore-eda's genius lies in his ability to suggest such conclusions without overloading the scene with dialogue or music: the philosophy rests entirely in the image.

Kore-eda's visual precision is one of the most recognisable features of his work. Yet he consistently avoids image-play that might locate him in a particular cultural or religious bracket. In making the film, he attempted to strip it of Japanese references; he admitted in an interview: "I didn't want people to fall back on thinking, 'Oh, that's how it's done in Japan.'" As Donald Richie recently commented in *A Hundred Years of Japanese Cinema*, "Kore-eda's work radiates a kind of respect which is now rare in any film, let alone one made in Japan." It is precisely this warmth that is the key to Kore-eda's aesthetic, a way of looking at the world that burns off ideological and national stereotypes. The film wriggles free of borders and categories at every point, from the counselors' love of Earl Grey tea to the constant name checking of various English and Hollywood actors. Even the corporate logo of Limbo is puzzling: two interlocking rings against a blue background—another of the film's indeterminate symbols open to whatever interpretation individual viewers bring to it.

Kore-eda's determination to leave loose ends is one of the most attractive elements of his work. He is not afraid to let things be. The ambiguity of images is stressed relatively early on in the film by Nakamura, who warns Shiori not to interrogate others via the following description of the moon. The moon fascinates us, he suggests, because "its shape never changes, yet it looks different depending on the angle of the light." Nakamura never glosses the meaning of this statement, any more than Kore-eda is willing to do in the film. But its elliptic beauty does hint at several important themes for both character and director: that people never appear the same to everyone, even to those who love them; that happiness and sadness are simply dif-

ferent interpretations of similar experiences; and that the meaning of a film depends not just on the shapes of the screen but also on the culture through which one sees it. Shiori is unable to take this in halfway through her training week, just as we are incapable of understanding the film fully having seen but half of it. Yet there is a sense in which some of these meanings are brought into play every time the characters notice the changing moon, which—in a lovely twist in the penultimate scene—turns out to have been a cut-out illusion.

Kore-eda explores the gap between artifice and reality throughout the film, particularly in the interviews between counselor and client. The appearance of authenticity in these scenes was well-earned. Preparations for *After Life* involved interviewing more than 500 people. Subjects picked from all walks of Japanese society were invited to describe the one memory they would take with them to heaven. Aside from helping Kore-eda to understand the necessary embroideries, gaps, and stories each of us adds to memory, this process also provided ten non-actors for the film's cast, and their reminiscences were written into the final script. Kore-eda explained that his initial intention was to provide "a 'history' of modern Japan from the Kanto earthquake in 1923 through the war and the post-war 'economic miracle' right up to the present wave of immigration from Iran and Asia. . . . But as I was doing the research I realized that this kind of intentionally based conceptual framework wasn't going to work—or at least wasn't going to be interesting. So I switched from a concept-driven choice of people to a character-driven choice." Kore-eda modestly downplays the historical relevance of the film. The saga of Japan he planned to film was, according to his version of events, quickly shelved. This was to be "afterlife" in terms of individual people caught up in global events, not afterlife as an allegory of the country's postwar generation (though clearly there is still an allusion to the A-bomb in the film's English title).

While this view is true to an extent—I make no claims for the film as a Japanese version of *The Birth of the Nation*—more politics remain in the cut than Kore-eda would have us believe. On a trivial level, this is most obvious in Sugie's disdain at yet another adolescent's choosing to remember Disneyland. Although she eventually persuades her to select the memory of her parents' smell instead, Mickey Mouse's global encroachment clearly reaches into heaven. The film's political jokes have a serious side too. Some of the most moving scenes in the film relate to the aftermath of World War II, when the Japanese veterans remember the struggle to get home. A woman recalls meeting her fiancé on a bridge at the end of war, while an old man reflects on his first encounter with 40 or 50 American soldiers and repeats the English words he used to ask them for cigarettes and rice. The beauty of both moments begins with the dialogue, but it is intensified by Kore-eda's attention to gesture and editing. As the woman is questioned about her lover, her head tilts to the right of the frame, knocked gently sideways by the memory of joy recovered. The old man also performs for the camera, his upright posture continually broken by his twitching hands, which energetically spoon out an imaginary bowl of rice as if the grains were actually in front of him. In each of these scenes, Kore-eda also employs discreet jump cuts, subtly suggesting the ellipses in accuracy and time that perhaps mark all memories. Yet this element of artifice is always present in the film, steadily undermining the "truth" claims of all its memoir makers. This does not devalue the witnesses to war in *After Life*, but it does encourage us to doubt the truth-telling ability of any human being. So a concept and understanding of history is apparent in the film, even if Kore-eda prefers to ignore it. Or is it rather that he lets us discover such things by ourselves?

One of Mochizuki's most difficult cases is that of Ichiro Watanabe, whose life contains no obvious moments to keep forever. In order to help him, Mochizuki calls up secretly recorded celestial videotapes of his life, one for every year. Whilst watching them with him, he is astonished to discover that Watanabe's wife was actually the fiancée he himself lost when he died of a war wound in 1945. The two men thus appear generations apart but are really the same age, though of course Mochizuki has spent most of his life in Limbo. The celestial reminders of life that allow Mochizuki to make this connection look like badly shot home movies. The image is blurred. The sound seems tinny. Even the acting looks fake. As Mochizuki warns Watanabe: "They won't match your memories exactly, so please just use them for reference." Among the mundane scenes of courtship and marriage shown are two moments that resonate throughout the film. In the first, Watanabe's future wife, Kyoko (Kyoko Kagawa), tries to connect with him via a conversation about the movies. In response to her enquiries about Ingrid Bergman and Joan Fontaine and whether he has seen *Rebecca*, the most the younger Watanabe can do is gesture unconvincingly toward a love of samurai films. The second important scene, and the one that Watanabe eventually chooses to keep forever, also relates to cinema, this time to an argument with his wife about

the outcome of that first conversation which ends, after much to-ing and fro-ing, with his promise to take her to the movies at least once a month. So that the final reel playing in his head is one that is emblematic of their entire relationship: a planned visit that never takes place and a topic of conversation only Kyoko can really understand.

The dynamics of their relationship interestingly resemble one of the few films mentioned by name in *After Life*. Watanabe, like Max de Winter in Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, is a significantly older suitor for his younger bride, although of course in Kore-eda's film it is the woman who is haunted by an earlier lover. In a strange rewriting of the earlier film, *After Life* gives the narrative back to the ghost, in this case Kyoko's first lover, Mochizuki. He is the silent presence that literally splits the screen apart whenever Kyoko and Watanabe are shot together. Sitting on a bench or facing each other across a restaurant table, space is always left between them for this other person to enter.

For this is a film about human life and death that is equally fascinated by the afterlife of images and stories. Reality, Kore-eda seems to suggest, is little more than a reference point most of us leave behind when constructing a sense of ourselves through memory. It is the out-of-focus home movie depicted on the celestial tapes that looks nothing like what we remember. Which is the main running joke of the film and its most profound observation. We do not actually want art to copy life; we want life to copy art. Kyoko still desires Mochizuki years later because in dying he has become, like Rebecca, forever elusive and permanently young. This is the memory that she chooses, of their last meeting together shortly before he left for war. Kore-eda's point is simple but rarely expressed. We live our lives through films and certainly remember them in a similar way not because we have lost a sense of reality, but because most of us have some inkling of the hours of tedious videotape waiting in Limbo. This is not a twentieth- or twenty-first-century observation—Thomas de Quincey said more or less the same 200 years ago. We have just been waiting for the technology to catch up. Cinema works like memory; perhaps it is the best artistic expression of it. Both dilute the graininess of the everyday with a sprinkle of never-never land: the freeze-frame, the lingering kiss, the yet-to-be-separated lovers. Hitchcock knew this in *Rebecca*, Kyoko remembers it at the cinema, and Kore-eda restates it in every frame. And so he allows the ghost of *Rebecca* to haunt *After Life* as the tendency to fantasize drifts through every memory.

Kore-eda's first film, *Maborosi*, which tells the story of a young woman trying to come to terms with her first husband's suicide, is also haunted by ghosts and memories. In one of the most lyrical and understated montage sequences in the film, Kore-eda follows the central character's son and stepdaughter as they meander homewards along the shore of a lake. For most of the sequence, a static camera watches them from at least 50 yards away. The landscape that surrounds them looks emptied of human activity, the sort of environment kids love to roam in away from adults. And for four or five minutes, nothing much happens. The children pass two wrecked objects that might otherwise attract their attention, a broken-down car by the side of the road and a useless boat grounded on the beach. But it is the geography of the peninsula that keeps them skipping along: particularly images of water. As the children run beside the lake, Kore-eda isolates them in miniature at the left of the frame and watches them edge sideways across it, like a skiff on the water moving imperceptibly forwards. In this manner, the children appear not so much invaders of nature as part of the place's geological ebb and flow, something also emphasised by the wistful music that accompanies most of the sequence. Such moments of epiphany are reminiscent of William Wordsworth's celebration of childhood "spots of time" that later sustain us as adults. Both filmmaker and poet share an interest in how children develop a sense of wonder and the extent to which it is checked and deepened by confrontation with death. *Maborosi* haunts the imagination because it, like *After Life*, believes in memories as ghosts, more "real" than reality.

Despite its seriousness, *After Life* has several lighter moments, most of them directed at those who work in Limbo. For the counselors who solemnly advise others on the importance of selecting one memory within three days were themselves unable to do so, hence their current occupation. This failure to make a decision haunts the majority of the characters, and usually manifests itself in a series of discussions among them about what constitutes memory and whether every sensation can be recreated on film. Those stranded in Limbo become either philosophers of memory or students of cinema. And Kore-eda's comic touch allows him to get away with such erudite or self-referential material. At the end of the second day, for example, the counselors meet to go over certain problem cases. They discuss whether it is possible to remember things accurately from an early age and how we can tell if these sensations are true. After the members of

the group have shared their own first memories, Nakamura suggests that it is possible to remember as far back as the womb. "Medical research proves it," he insists. "If you close your eyes and insert yourself in water, the memory of the sense of security of being inside your mother can help with anxiety and other conditions." Sugie, who has looked disinterested at most of the preceding debate, seems suddenly curious. Her eyes nervously glance around the table as if to check for the others' reactions. Kore-eda cuts first to the outside of a door with the sign, "Bath Occupied." After lingering a second or two, we move to a shot of an almost-full bath and a totally submerged Sugie, who eventually pops her head up to catch a gulp of air before quickly re-immersing herself. The humour is understated. Sugie is after all admitting to her own anxiety. But Kore-eda does seem to encourage our laughter in the immediate cutaway from Nakamura to Sugie, and from the bathroom sign to a glimpse of jet-black hair. There is something touching about Sugie's faith that reminds one of childhood, not especially of the sensation of being in the womb but certainly of believing in adults' tall stories.

Kore-eda consistently probes at the limits of cinema in depicting nonvisual memories like this. "People remember a touch, a taste, something that brushed their skin. In the 100 years since cinema has been around I feel it has constantly been straining against the limitation of being a largely visual medium; there's something about the way we watch films that push the boundary." Most of the memories chosen in *After Life* draw on the kind of sensations cinema has always had to find alternative ways of evoking. A man remembers the breeze coming through the tram window on the way to school; a woman recalls eating rice balls immediately after the Kanto earthquake; a man boasting of his unfaithfulness looks back with affection on the taste of home-made porridge cooked by his wife. How can a film literally describe a touch or taste like this? Some of the clients even consider the possibility of taking a dream with them, while 21-year-old Iseya (played by his namesake, Yusuke Iseya) wonders whether he can invent an image of the future. Kore-eda never solves these conundrums; perhaps cinema never can. But in posing the questions, he does make us more alive to what the image can do. In one of the most poignant scenes in the film, an old lady directs her child stand-in as both combine to recreate the former's memory of dancing "The Red Shoes." Perhaps this is what we all do with memories. We create a beautiful dance that has no more than a tangential relationship to reality, but reminds us of it nonetheless. Cinema's ability to evoke the five senses works more or less in the same way. Sight and sound together can only begin the journey to recollection; the rest is up to us.

The same is equally true of the religious content of the film and its relation to certain ideas of heaven and hell. As Kore-eda has observed: "If someone who has a religion chooses to bring it to this film, then that's up to them. It's not for me to tell them they're wrong." As much as Kore-eda seems intrigued by an idea of heaven based around the perpetual thought of one memory, he is also willing to portray its nightmarish side. As Iseya asks: Who actually wants to live with a single memory forever, however perfect it happens to be? "It's your whole set-up here that needs rethinking." Iseya's refusal to follow the rules land him in Limbo with the other counselors, although maybe this in-between state is more of a utopia than *A Clockwork Orange*-like scenario of continually watching the same reel of film again and again. Those who stay in Limbo spend most of their time listening to others in an attempt to capture some essence of life on film. They are extreme movie-lovers who avoid making decisions about their own lives by living vicariously through others. But perhaps most of us exist in a similar Limbo to Iseya's and Sugie's, too aware of reality's drabness ever to give ourselves entirely to it, too honest to make up memories completely. Which is why, when Mochizuki finally chooses a memory, he records himself sitting alone on a bench watching his friends filming. Most memories, like most films, are a subtle trade-off between reality and fiction. Mochizuki realises this at the end of the week, and in effect takes Limbo with him to eternity. *After Life* deserves a similar fate regardless of one's own philosophical stance, if only as an homage to cinema and to its ability to help us remember as much as forget.

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Abstract Jonathan Ellis: "After Life" (review). This is an analysis of Hirokazu Kore-eda's second film, *After Life* (1998), a cinema lover's view of what might happen in heaven were a film crew in charge rather than a host of guardian angels. The film is examined within the context of Kore-eda's career as a documentary filmmaker as well as within contemporary debates about the process of experiencing cinematic images.

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PART TWO

Action TV

Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks

Edited by Bill Osgerby and Anna Gough-Yates. New York: Routledge, 2001. $75.00 cloth; $22.95 paper.

Writing on television, after so many years, still seems to veer dangerously from the apocalyptic to the purely celebratory. Between fan literature and invectives against the culture industry, where is the space for a critical historical examination of television content and the context of its creation and reception? The content that is *Action TV*'s title and subject was first and most notably analyzed by David Buxton in 1990. In *From The Avengers to Miami Vice: Form and Ideology in the Television Series*, Buxton set about to classify and create a chronology of the action series as it appeared on television from the 1950s to the 1980s. His history traces the evolution of the form through three stages in reaction to changes in the culture surrounding it, leading to an end point where the form had been "exhausted," giving the "impression of a dead time, a cultural form that has come to the end of the road" (160). The 90s proved him wrong, with the appearance of a number of successful shows in the action narrative tradition. New action series continue to appear with every TV season. At the same time, the resurrection of classic action series on cable television, reissued on DVD, or in the movie remake cycle which has taken us from *The Fugitive* to *Mission Impossible* and now *Charlie's Angels 2*, ensures that these relics persist in our own time. Their refusal to "stay dead" demands a closer look, an understanding not just of what they mean to us, but of their place in their original viewing contexts.

For the editors of *Action TV*, this reexamination entails moving "beyond a simple focus on the formal properties of 'the text,' instead contextualizing the action series within its economic and cultural conditions of production, circulation and consumption" (4). The book's first chapter, "The Business of Action," relates the history of the TV industry, with a look to how serial programs were continually retooled in the competition for audiences, advertisers, and ultimately profits. The action series came to Britain, for instance, when a producer named Lew Grade changed the nature of programming on his new franchise, announcing "I am not here to educate the public. I am here to entertain them" (19). In the following two decades, Grade and his production company would invest heavily in the development of action series, many of them with an eye to export, especially millions of dollars of sales to the U.S. market. While we tend to think of TV as an American hegemonic export, *Action TV* reminds us that it was very much a joint venture. The book's contributors are predominantly British academics, and their essays sometimes focus on series which will be less familiar to readers in the United States. At their best, they make us wish we did have access to these series. At other times, we may feel lucky to have been spared. The international circulation of action series is not, however, a focus of the book, though it would be very interesting to look more closely at the implications of this dual origin of the genre.

The groundwork laid, 14 essays by as many writers trace the action series as it changed in form and ideology in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, accompanying changing perceptions of race and gender as well as new concerns with crime, law and order, and technology. The essays are case studies, focusing on specific programs and their relationships to some

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aspect of their times, and they are organized in four loose categories. The first, "Situating the Action TV Series," provides model examinations of series, which are reframed in their original "wider institutional and historical context" (5). Thus, in Bill Osgerby's essay, "The Saint" provides a window into changing ideas of masculinity in the 1960s, just as those changes provide a new window into the show. It is hard to see much distinction between this approach and the focus of the second part, "Representation and Cultural Politics in the Action TV Series," which provides a similar treatment of "Charlie's Angels" vis-à-vis the "lifestyle feminism" gaining currency in the 1970s. In this section, Paul Cobley also revisits "Kojak" with an eye to how the Great Society had oriented Americans to ethnicity, poverty, and rights as a social question. His excellent reading of the TV text against the concerns of its moment is of equal value to "Kojak" fans and those who might join their ranks, their curiosity piqued by Cobley's findings.

The third part of the book turns to the television audience, with three essays positing that viewers' sometimes unexpected or varying reactions to series reveal the "polysemic potential of the text." But Martin Pumphrey's essay about the preservation of TV Western constructions of masculinity in men's memories of watching and acting out the series disappoints. His conclusions are based on a "study" of a very unscientific sample of 15 men, the majority of whom were between the ages of 43 and 53 and "worked in Higher Education" (146). The analysis of the subjects' playing cowboys and Indians as gender-role performance is unconvincing after the careful historical analysis of many of the other contributors. Similarly unconvincing is Joke Hermes' tale of her own adolescent enthusiasm for the ultra-masculine "The Persuaders!" as evidence that "the series' relatively diffuse coding of masculinity offered valuable spaces for a process of cross-gender identification" (167). Editor Anna Gough-Yates's essay on "Charlie's Angels" examines far more successfully the very mixed messages that a series can send, and that a female audience might have drawn out, about changing gender roles. She rescues a show vilified by feminists (though still beloved by many) to explore its appeal in its time to an audience which included many "liberated" women.

The book's last section takes its interest in the series' surroundings to its logical conclusion, focusing not on any show itself but on the way that "the codes, conventions, and iconography of action TV series have cut across a range of different media forms" (7). There is an examination of the evolution of TV theme music, and of the relation between TV series and their serialized comic book spin-offs. The integration of television with everyday experience becomes literally tangible in the network TV constituted along with other forms of cultural production. In "Of Leather Suits and Kinky Boots," Marc O'Day analyzes the "icon-led style—a style at once 'stylish' and 'stylized'" of "The Avengers" (222). The fashion and merchandising which were as essential a part of people's experience of "The Avengers" as the show itself, and the recycling of both commodities (show and accessories) through the last decade bring us all the way up to the Avengers movie of 1998.

Throughout the book, the writers of *Action TV* approach the question of the recent craze for recycling the action series of the past, "the sixties in the nineties," as one contributor puts it. But the most effective examination comes in the book's strongest essay, Andy Medhurst's "King and Queen: Interpreting Sexual Identity in *Jason King*." The 1971-72 series, which is apparently venerated by the "kitsch-and-irony lobby" in Britain while remaining, I would say, virtually unknown elsewhere, featured a hero whose "sexual narratives were entirely heterosexual [while] his appearance, mannerisms and speech were saturated with elements of camp and queerness" (169). Jason King's simultaneous appeal to heterosexual women as a sex symbol and to gay male viewers as "one of them" is a shining example of a multiplicity of meanings and readings in one TV text. Looking at Jason King's enduring kitsch appeal, Medhurst makes a very clear distinction between the camp elements of resistance to the experience of social marginalization (185) and an ironic celebration of kitsch which "is sometimes fuelled by misogyny and class prejudice towards a ridiculed 'implied other'"—the original and un-ironic consumers of these resurrected texts (183). This is made disturbingly clear by the re-release in 1998 of an album recorded by the star of "Jason King" in 1970, which features among others a celebratory track called "Rape." That this album, which went out of circulation in the first place because of the controversy over its content, should be embraced 30 years later as a kitschy "classic," Medhurst argues, goes to show that "some elements of the King persona need to be vigorously criticized, not indulged under the banner of kitsch" (185). Here is the model for the reading of popular texts in their context and ours. This story reminds us that as we reach deep into mass culture to recover the many things worth preserving, we would do best to leave others firmly buried in the past.

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After Fellini

National Cinema in the Postmodern Age

By Millicent Marcus. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. $21.50.

Federico Fellini is a name familiar even to those people who are neither particularly interested in nor knowledgeable about Italian cinema and culture. Films such as *La Dolce Vita* and *8 1/2* have become synonymous with Italian cinema and culture. So it is not surprising that to Millicent Marcus, Fellini is "signifier, synecdoche . . . and man-symbol" of a time when cinema "occupied a position of cultural primacy" (3). The title of this book is therefore tantalizing, simultaneously

suggesting that Fellini functions both as the dividing line between two epochs (the B.C./A.D. of cinema history) and as the director who influenced all those who came after him. In fact, Marcus's discussion, in chapter 9, of Fellini's *Ginger and Fred*, which was originally conceived as a television episode that he later turned into a full-length film, focuses on how Fellini influenced Fellini. That is, Federico Fellini himself recycled some of the motifs from his previous films in order to situate *Ginger and Fred* (1985) into what Marcus calls the director's "ongoing autobiographic/meta-cinematic process" (182). The title of Marcus's book further suggests that in cinema there is no escape from his shadow. Nevertheless, it is also clear that contemporary Italian cinema is very different from what it was in his day, not surprising when we consider that cinema, perhaps more than any other medium, is both a reflection and a product of its time and environment.

In the introduction, Marcus contextualizes contemporary Italian cinema by explaining the reasons for its quality of "afterness" (3). Among the reasons adduced are the disappearance of the great post–World War II auteurist directors; the changes in ideological and generic impulses that "fueled the revolutionary achievements" of the auteurs' successors; the discrediting of the Left and the fall of Communism; and the end of the political engagement that was the foundation of realist cinema and its offshoots. Finally, and perhaps most determining, was the deregulation of Italian television and its consequences. It is the ascendancy of television that Marcus identifies as the principal agent that has caused a seismic shift in the relationship between signifiers and signifieds in Italian culture. As Marcus states, borrowing a phrase from another critic, "A constant diet of *Happy Days* and *Bay Watch* conspired 'to deprive a generation of its own imaginary'" (5).

Marcus's approach in this book is semiotic, although not aggressively so. She utilizes some of semiotics' jargon, she quotes some of its leading proponents, but her argument does not rely on the reader's knowledge in order to be forceful or coherent. Thus, drawing on the terminology of semiotics and the work of the noted Italian cinema historian and critic Gian Piero Brunetta, Marcus speaks of the televisual language as the new "mother tongue" and the cinematographic as the "adopted language" (5). Further extending the analogy into a semiotic context, this time borrowing from Baudrillard, she argues that the difference between the two can be understood as "the difference between simulation and mimesis, between a signifying system that ignores or subverts its referential function and one that points toward an external signified" (5). In the course of *After Fellini*, Marcus therefore traces the vicissitudes of "the referent," ending with three essays on "the return of the referent" which bring her argument full circle.

The book is divided into five sections; the first, "Looking Back," consists of two essays, one on Rossellini's *Paisan* (1946). Marcus sees it as a model against which she then measures what she calls contemporary film practice. She has chosen this film because she considers it a powerful example of filmmaking as a "foundational act," instrumental in building a national consciousness in the wake of the twin disasters of Fascism and World War II. In Section 2, the author examines some of the films that resulted when, as she claims, the cinema of social reference was "forced to go underground" (10), thereby leading filmmakers to tell Italy's story by "deflection, allegory or proxy" (10). Among the films in question are Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* (1984) and Salvatores' *Mediterraneo* (1991). Section 3 features films that adopt the family unit as a medium for social allegory. Here Marcus develops discussions around Francesco Rosi's *Three Brothers* (1981) and Ricky Tognazzi's *La Scorta* (1992), among others. Two of the themes analyzed are the rural/urban shifts and the displacement occasioned by industrialized life versus a return to a mythic homeland. In Section 4, Marcus turns her attention to metacinematic themes, examining three issues: the psychological baggage associated with cinema (*Cinema Paradiso* [1988]); the possible death of cinema itself; and television's challenge to cinema through its multiple forms of contamination (*Ginger and Fred* and *The Icicle Thief* [1989]). Finally, with Rosi's *The Truce* (1997), Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful* (1997), and Moretti's *Caro Diario* (1993), Marcus detects a "testimonial function" that heralds a return both to the social referent that she discussed in Section 1 and the moral accountability that she has seen represented especially in Neorealism, that quintessential expression not only of Italian cinema but its culture as well.

After Fellini is a felicitous combination of the scholarly and the popular: thoroughly researched and certainly meaty enough for the specialist, yet not abstruse and jargon-laden. Marcus offers many perceptive and original insights even into films that have been treated many times by other critics. What she does particularly well is to synthesize the details to come up with a fresh reading, playing a complex game of connect-the-dots where every dot matters in the final revelation of the big picture.

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An American Family

A Televised Life

By Jeffrey Ruoff. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. $19.95.

Imagine the following: an innovative television series self-consciously combines the conventions of melodrama, family sitcom, and observational cinema. The popularity of the series sets new records, and talking about the family becomes something of a national pastime, with everyone from celebrities to social scientists eager to weigh in on what the

series means about the state of family and nation. In spite of stylistic choices that point to the constructedness of the series, commentators struggle to distinguish the family from their television selves, often seeming to blame the family itself for perpetuating a breakdown in American values. Before long, the family members' celebrity spins off into other genres: their faces become ubiquitous on magazine covers, they accept book deals, the children form their own rock group and perform on television.

I could be writing about "The Osbournes," but I'm actually thinking of "An American Family," the 12-part documentary produced for public television. First broadcast in 1973, the show made its subjects, the Loud family of Santa Barbara, California, into household names. Set against a backdrop of sunny California affluence, the saga of the Louds' deteriorating marriage provided the narrative backbone for producer Craig Gilbert's attempt to bring observational cinema to television audiences. The Louds' eventual separation, together with the family's acceptance of their gay son, Lance, provoked national discussion about middle-class values and the boundaries between public and private. In the ensuing decades, references to "An American Family" have functioned as shorthand for observational cinema's tendency to focus on the personal and to push the boundaries of privacy (see, for example, Brian Winston's *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited*). From the vantage point of "The Osbournes," "An American Family" still has the power to shock, but for different reasons: viewers accustomed to the conventions of contemporary reality television may have trouble adjusting to the relatively long shots and sometimes unintelligible sound. At the same time, viewers steeped in the traditions of observational cinema may find the occasional voiceover narration and the didactic opening sequences unsettling. Jeffrey Ruoff's *An American Family: A Televised Life* goes to the heart of this discomfort, offering both a clear analysis of the series' genre crossing and an exploration of the benefits and costs of its attempts to straddle melodrama and nonfiction, television and film, low-brow and high art.

Arguing that most film and television studies are concerned only with the finished product, Ruoff examines "An American Family" "from conception to reception" (xx). His research includes everything from interviews with the production staff to a thorough reading of the publicity packet. The first two chapters form an extensive production study, the middle chapters provide close readings, and the final chapters analyze the show's reception and the Louds' ensuing celebrity. Chapter 1 chronicles the institutional history of public television in the early 1970s and explores the "original intentions" of the producer. While Ruoff makes a convincing argument for considering authorial intent, he does not address what it means to reconstruct intentions, and he offers little clue as to his methodology for navigating the evidence. Gilbert reportedly wanted to make a series that would critique idealized representations of family life and reveal the social relations obscured by dominant media. However, the producer chose to introduce television audiences to observational cinema (which eschews interviews and historical footage) via the familiar, personalizing conventions of television melodrama. Both choices militated against placing the Louds in the requisite sociohistorical context. Ruoff tells us that "Gilbert *was* genuinely interested in a historical perspective. . . . But the drama of the Louds' separation, itself extremely topical, edged out other considerations, eliminating the producer's historical pretensions" (22). Given the rich contradictions, I yearned for more consideration of the vagaries of intention.

Chapter 2 further complicates questions of authorship by considering the roles of cinematographer, sound operator, and editing team. Gilbert hired Alan and Susan Raymond to shoot "An American Family," but the relationship between producer and filmmakers, like the Louds' marriage, deteriorated over the course of the filming. Ruoff acknowledges the tensions without descending into gossip. (At times I almost wished for more dish, wondering whether unresolved "disagreements over authorship" are the reason why the series is not currently available for sale or rent [25].) However, the chapter's main achievement is as a chronicle of the skill, organization, and sheer human labor that went into creating a documentary of this scope. Ruoff's detailed description of the production process is especially valuable in light of the reticence and mystification that surrounds many works of observational cinema. Even given the singularity of "An American Family," Ruoff's account belies (once again) the movement's rhetoric of passive recording.

Until now, scholars in search of information about "An American Family" have been limited to a few scattered articles, mostly authored by those involved in the show's production. The scarcity of published materials makes the broad scope of Ruoff's book particularly valuable. Those who teach reality television in their undergraduate courses will especially appreciate chapter 3, "A Bastard Union of Several Forms." It combines a brief but insightful narrative of the development of observational cinema, a summary of common conventions of television serials, and a string of close readings that show how "An American Family" offers multiple points of viewer identification. But while Ruoff wants to reaffirm "the capital, if no longer central, role of close analysis in media studies," his close readings are somewhat perfunctory (xxiv). These chapters perform the admirable function of making the series available to new generations of media scholars, but they leave plenty of room for further analysis. Chapter 5, "Sound in Documentary," offers some terms for discussing sound in documentary and may be useful for general courses in documentary where students need help understanding observational cinema sound conventions qua conventions. In the end, the insights into "An American Family" itself are fairly modest. We learn that dialogue is occasionally unintelligible due to "competing ambient sound," and several brief readings establish that the editors used location music to offer comments on the action (81). Ruoff also notes the ways in which "An American Family" deviates from the norms of observational cinema, using voiceovers and prerecorded music. Certain sections of this chapter, such as a brief history of the rock documentary, seem like filler, and a section on reflexivity in

"An American Family" feels as though it has been tacked on the end to fill out the chapter.

Ruoff occasionally uses other documentary critics as foils for his own insights. Given that *A Televised Life* is the first extended study of this fascinating material, such moves seem unnecessary. Ruoff references E. Ann Kaplan's 1982 article, "Theories and Strategies of the Feminist Documentary," as a straw person for "film theorists who denounce observational documentaries that disguise the work of mediation," suggesting that Kaplan and her presumed cohorts "would do well to look closely at 'An American Family'" (90). The choice of Kaplan's article to represent this particular theoretical stance seems odd, because the article in question actually questions blanket renunciations of realist aesthetics. Admittedly there's no shortage of critics who castigate observational cinema in precisely the terms Ruoff mentions. However, I think he would do better to situate himself as part of a critical reevaluation of observational cinema. In spite of the movement's rhetoric of transparency, a growing number of critics are acknowledging that observational cinema has often embedded references to performance and mediation, leaving open the possibility of reflexive readings. (Paul Arthur mentions the beginnings of such a trend in his 1993 essay, "Jargons of Authenticity [Three American Moments].")

In the final chapters, Ruoff argues that publicity materials largely set the terms for the series' critical reception. The press packet highlighted the family's materialism and superficiality, suggesting that the Louds represented the American dream gone awry. The advertising campaign was even more negative and sensationalistic. Ruoff describes one advertisement that "exploited Lance's sexual orientation, hinting that he dyed his clothes purple 'as a personal expression of . . . something . . . something he wasn't fully aware of at the time'" (100). Although Lance never explicitly comes out on film, the show's publicists were clearly not above resorting to innuendo to capture more viewers. Ironically, as Ruoff notes, producer Gilbert initially chose an observational style because he believed that it would allow viewers to make their own judgments about what they saw. However, he was not involved in the production of the publicity materials, which dictated a point of view that was replicated in various ways across the majority of reviews. Ruoff's readings of the publicity materials and the reviews are witty and insightful; in addition to establishing the reviewers' debts to the press packet, he examines the assumptions behind the critics' virulent ad hominem attacks on the Loud family. Many reviewers wrote as though the series' 12 episodes had granted them complete and total access to the Loud family's innermost thoughts. In response to critic Ann Roiphe's comment that the teenaged Delilah Loud "never grieved for the migrant workers, the lettuce pickers, the war dead," Ruoff wryly counters with a quote from Sol Worth: "Pictures can't say ain't" (104).

In the end, Ruoff contends that "Gilbert paid a heavy price for the crass publicity. . . . The blend of seriousness and sensationalism that greeted the series issued from the combination of a 'highbrow' (documentary) mode with 'lowbrow' (situation comedy and soap opera) ones. References to the series as a soap opera invariably carried negative associations of melodrama and triviality" (101-02). Here, as throughout the volume, Ruoff is attuned to the critical consequences of television's low cultural status. On this subject, *An American Family: A Televised Life* complements work such as Kevin Glynn's *Tabloid Culture: Trash Taste, Popular Power, and the Transformation of American Television*. However, Ruoff himself seems more interested in situating the series in relation to a cinematic tradition than in relation to tabloid TV; the book ends with a brief history of first-person documentary. Ruoff argues that "Thanks to *An American Family*, interpersonal relations, family, gender, and sexuality have now become staples of American nonfiction film and video" (136). While the series undoubtedly influenced a generation of filmmakers, this claim elides the ways in which social movements of the late 1960s and 70s changed the course of documentary film history. *An American Family: A Televised Life* will be a valuable resource for those who seek information about the production and marketing of the unique series. With any luck it will engender new analyses of the relationship between the show's formal innovations, its institutional location, and a historical moment in which many Americans were redefining "private" structures as public, political issues.

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Atlas of Emotion

Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film

By Giuliana Bruno. New York: Verso, 2002. $45.00.

Giuliana Bruno takes us on a journey for which she has no map save her encyclopedic knowledge of theories of film, architecture, space, and the body. All readers of this book must be content with the fact that their guide prefers to wander without a constraining itinerary in a vast and complex terrain of 400 years of theorizing on space, vision, urbanism, architecture, film, visuality, and all their requisite subcategories (anatomy, perspective, geography, physiognomics, gender, memory, museology, tourism, cartography, and so on). Bruno's own pleasure in the meanderings of her narrative on the intellectual historical landscape is perhaps the most truly enjoyable aspect of the book. One must simply be happy with her company, along with that of virtually every important theorist of film, architectural space, and urban space who has put pen to paper in the last couple of hundred years. The narrative structure of Bruno's book generates ideas in a form not unlike casting a handful of small stones onto the surface of a still pond and creating a complex web of interconnecting, moving arcs. Such a journey is, as she makes clear in her preface, also a more intimate one. For the scholar in search of thesis topics, here is a mine of unparalleled riches, to say nothing of a model of interdisciplinary discourse.

Among Bruno's goals is the interrogation of the formation of a sort of period eye—to borrow Michael Baxandall's terminology—of Western modernity, where urban and architectural spaces develop alongside the articulation of cinematic spaces. Her method is to follow the route of her own stream of consciousness—learned consciousness that it is—activated often by key words and by all of the rich metaphorical associations that can be gathered around them. The turning of these conceptual corners might be disorienting for some readers, but for anyone wanting to experience a vertiginous display of genuine interdisciplinarity, Bruno's book is a thrilling ride. At the same time, for the more casual reader, the high theory present throughout is fairly accessible and jargon-free.

The book is in many ways an expansion of the issues Bruno dealt with in her extraordinary earlier book, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*. This explosion of the issues is both the strength and weakness of *Atlas of Emotion*. Where the thread of analysis in the former book was by held in topographical check by the early Italian filmmaker Elvira Notari and the urban spaces of Naples, we have no such Ariadne for the latter. The more encompassing gestures—the puns are difficult to avoid here—of *Atlas of Emotion* resemble the long and satisfying yoga stretch. These alternate with contractions where Bruno deals with very specific case studies, ranging from Maya Deren on clothes, Situationist psychogeography, and reflections on the architectural spaces in the films of Peter Greenaway to Gerhard Richter's ongoing *Atlas* installation and collection. The structure of the volume is also characterized by biographical ebb and flow, where the book begins and ends with more intimate musings of the author herself, freely admitting her role throughout as exile and cicerone.

Perhaps the most important contribution of *Atlas of Emotion* is Bruno's borrowing of the concept of the haptic, which originated with Alois Riegl's articulation of it as a new way to consider visual art which, for many interesting reasons, had been studied mostly in terms of the optic. Through Benjamin, who renovated Riegl's notions to find in modernity a tendency towards haptic experiences, Bruno sees that cinema's intellectual history, like art history, has been dominated by optical theorizing. The optical distances the medium, objectifies it, and separates the spectator from the spectacle. Bruno's consideration of the haptic opens the possibilities of the spectator penetrating the spaces of the film and feeling its textures and realms. Indeed, Bruno argues that film exists to accomplish this very physical invitation to the viewer's body. The reorientation directs her to consider interiority rather than exteriority, and all that that very richly implies not only in film but in cultural studies in general and gender studies in particular.

For film theorists and historians the book holds many attractions. Bruno eschews the fixity of the Lacanian gaze for the wandering, and feminine, eye of the flâneuse, and in doing so she undermines some of the high theorizing on film of recent decades. In her reframing of the importance of film and motion, e-motion, and the haptic model, she is able at various points to positively reconsider, for example, Hugo Münsterberg's *The Photoplay, A Psychological Study* of 1916 and its focus on how film elicits emotional engagement in the spectator. Her ideas complement those of cognitive film theorists, who have also been recently reconsidering Münsterberg's early volume. Bruno also gives fresh readings of Siegfried Kracauer (based on Miriam Hansen's exemplary work on Kracauer), André Bazin, Béla Balázs, and Jean Epstein, among others.

Like Bruno's earlier work, this book is strikingly original yet disarmingly gracious in affirming the relevant contributions of others. Researchers will find the book infinitely useful as a treasure of ideas, which are often spun out and left tantalizingly open-ended. The scope of the book is such that tracing its myriad itineraries is impossible in a review, and at 461 pages the book is no mere weekend outing. But if one objective of travel is to reset one's eyes and to see one's home anew, scholars in many disciplines will be advised to sign up for the tour.

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Bollywood Cinema

Temples of Desire

By Vijay Mishra. New York: Routledge, 2002. $85.00 cloth; $24.95 paper.

Until recently, Bombay popular cinema, commonly referred to as "Bollywood Cinema," has often been dismissed by Indian cinema scholars as mindless, apolitical entertainment and placed in direct opposition to art cinema directors like Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen. Yet it is impossible to ignore the world's largest film industry, and the increase in the number of academic works published on the subject signifies a growing interest not just in Bollywood Cinema's economic clout, but its artistic, political, social, and religious impact on the Indian population. Works like Sumita S. Chakravarty's *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema: 1947-1987* (1993) chronicle how Bollywood Cinema, from its origins in the early twentieth century, has simultaneously affirmed and transgressed the dominant values of Indian society during colonial rule, the postcolonial quest for a modern, unified Indian identity, and the rise of Hindu Fundamentalist-Muslim strife during the late 1980s that diminished India's hopes for a harmonious nation-state.

The struggle for Bollywood Cinema to reinforce Indian national identity for its population also forms the framework of Vijay Mishra's *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, but as Mishra states, ". . . nation is only one of many objectives of the desiring machine . . . (in Bollywood Cinema)" (1). Even at the height of post-Independence nationalism, constructing a postcolonial Indian identity in Bollywood Cinema has always included an element of individualized desire that allowed class, gender, religious, and sexual violations to occur. Contemporary Bollywood Cinema relies

less on the articulation of broad, nationalist themes and more on the "self-projection" of the individual star's physical and cultural desirability onto the screen in order to cater not just to Indian residents, but also to members of the growing Indian diaspora, whose desire for self-representation results from feelings of alienation from their homeland. Therefore, Mishra's book incorporates various theoretical approaches, ranging from psychoanalysis to reception theory, into a noteworthy study of the relationship between Bollywood Cinema and the construction of Indian identity both within and outside the nation-state's boundaries.

The book contains eight chapters that map a rough chronology of Bollywood Cinema, but no detailed histories are given. Instead, each chapter examines key film texts that embody the book's overarching theme of the struggle between tradition and modernity in Bollywood Cinema. In chapter 1, "Inventing Bombay Cinema," Mishra dates this struggle back to the nineteenth century, when Indian theater productions of Hindu epic texts, such as the *Mahabharata* (*MBH*) and the *Ramayana*, adapted some of the characteristics of British theater, such as the proscenium arch and the placement of the performer directly on stage in front of the audience. These productions formed the basis for Bollywood's cinematic practices in that it utilized a medium of Western origin to reproduce traditional Hindu values, or what Mishra calls "the meta-text of dharma," that were present in *MBH* and the *Ramayana*. He argues that even films in the 1930s that attempted to deal with contemporary social issues such as alcoholism and inter-caste relations were blanketed with the meta-text of dharma because characters that violated certain codes of behavior were divinely punished with physical and mental harm, and even death.

Chapter 2, "Melodramatic Staging," describes the use of melodrama, which Mishra attributes to classical Hollywood cinema, as a "glue" that holds the "heterogeneous genre of Bollywood Cinema" together. Melodrama reinforced the suppression of post-Independence nationalism's modernization efforts by once again upholding dharmic values in an emotional manner that symbolized religious significance for the spectator. In chapter 3, "The Texts of 'Mother India,'" Mishra discusses the problematic of gender in post-Independence Bollywood Cinema, particularly in terms of the overreliance on the figure of the Mother as a symbol of Indian identity. Chapter 4, "Auteurship and the Lure of Romance," uncovers narrative and stylistic structures of phallic desire and an ambivalence to dominant nationalist ideologies in the films of post-Independence auteurs Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt. Mishra argues that Kapoor and Dutt, whose careers flowered from the late 1940s until the early 1960s, represented "the first full burst of the postcolonial Indian sense of artistic self-assurance" (123).

In chapter 5, "The Actor as Parallel Text: Amitabh Bachchan," Mishra outlines the anti-hero superstar's rule of Bollywood Cinema in the 1970s and 1980s as a case study of the star system and how the popularity of his violent films signified India's growing disillusionment with the peaceful maintenance of the nation-state. Chapter 6, "Segmenting/Analyzing Two Foundational Texts," dissects two films scene by scene in order to analyze the importance of song texts and symmetrical narratives in Bollywood Cinema. Mishra argues that segmenting films in this manner reveals how a single film is linked together thematically and how each film is situated in the grand intertextual system of Bollywood Cinema. Chapter 7, "After Ayodhya: The Sublime Object of Fundamentalism," focuses on how Indian television and film productions of the late 1980s and early 1990s indirectly advocated the Hindu fundamentalism that stemmed from the unhealed wounds of India-Pakistan partition. Finally, Mishra states, in "Bombay Cinema and Diasporic Desire," that despite some notable examples, the Indian diaspora has utilized Bollywood Cinema mostly to alleviate feelings of isolation. The cinema fulfills the diaspora's needs for self-representation, displays images of an "authentic" India, and presents the West in an "Indianized" fashion that is more accessible. But Mishra makes an important distinction between representing the diaspora and Bollywood's representation of it as an exotic, dangerous place where class, caste, and sexual transgressions can occur without consequence. He concludes that Bollywood Cinema will continue its growth in popularity within the Indian diaspora by maintaining a relatively stable ideology of "Indianness."

For the most part, Mishra succeeds in the difficult task of locating the subjective aspects of human desire that both inform and subvert Bollywood Cinema's dominant representations of Indian identity, particularly in his discussions of gender and religious politics within the industry. Throughout the book, Mishra masterfully describes the male and female stars' negotiations between their onscreen cooperation with Bollywood's Hindu dharmic codes and the religious and/or sexual violations of those codes off-screen, using 1950s screen siren Nargis and 1970s anti-hero Amitabh Bachchan as two of many excellent examples. As Mishra argues, Nargis came to represent the virtuous Mother figure in Indian nationalist discourse through her starring role in Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957), despite the fact that she was the daughter of a Muslim courtesan and the former lover of Raj Kapoor, and she later married Sunil Dutt, the man who played her son in the film. In another chapter on post-Partition violence, Mishra connects the ideological uneasiness of Nargis's designation as Mother India to her son Sanjay's arrest in 1993 for allegedly smuggling arms to Muslim terrorists.

Amitabh Bachchan's worldwide popularity is partially attributed to fanzines that publicized his extramarital affairs with co-stars and helped to cement his reputation as a sexually appealing vigilante, the same reputation that would eventually lead to a disastrous stint in Indian politics during the 1980s. Therefore, Mishra links the individual star and film with the social, economic, and political aspects of Bollywood Cinema in a way that channels the histories of both India and the West (via the Hollywood star system). As a result, he not only builds upon connections made in previous works regarding the cinema's cultural implications, but also makes significant inroads in deconstructing its representations of a pan-Indian alternate universe and readying it for a much-needed examination in a global context.

However, the analysis of Bollywood Cinema's appeal in the diaspora might have been developed further. Mishra makes some valid points about the cinema's simplified representations of the diaspora in recent films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) and *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1999), as well as its efforts to appeal to the diaspora not just in the films themselves, but through satellite television and live concert performances. His evaluation of the Canadian film *Masala* (1991) also brings up important questions about the perception of an authentic India in diasporic cultures. Yet his definition of the diaspora itself remains categorized as uniformly unhappy and passive, with only brief references to gender and geographical, generational, and religious differences in their interpretations of Bollywood Cinema, and more generally, of Indian identity. While Mishra's observations of isolation and longing within diasporic communities are certainly true, more attention should be paid to examining these differences further, especially in light of a number of recent films not mentioned in this book that have been produced by diasporic Indians and influenced by Bollywood Cinema.

Yet overall, *Bollywood Cinema* remains a groundbreaking text that exhibits great methodological versatility in outlining how the cinema's conflicting desires for tradition and modernity have been reproduced throughout its history. Increased global visibility from diasporic and non-Indian realms will undoubtedly play a role in Bollywood's next manifestation.

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China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity

By Sheldon H. Lu. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001. $55.00 cloth; $22.95 paper.

For Western enthusiasts of Asian cinema, there's been an intriguing schism in the past decade or so between the massive international popularity of New Chinese filmmakers such as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige and those same filmmakers' endless battles against suppression in their own country. While these directors' overtly political works have been censored heavily in China, complicated economic and political factors (along with the increasingly vital international film festival market) have made them celebrities on the American art-house circuit, bringing the local (these directors generally focus on primitive, rural settings—sometimes subtly catering to Westerners' racist impressions of the Chinese as a "backward" people) to the global on a major scale. Anyone wishing to understand this contradiction—as well as just about anything else about the state of Chinese art and academia in the 1990s—will find a useful resource in Professor Sheldon H. Lu's *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity*, an ambitious attempt to chart the changing roles of China's intellectuals and artists in an era of postmodern confusion over national identity.

The post-Cold War period has unleashed a shift in intellectual discourse in China, as both practical and political concerns have led to a more fluid sense of national identity and a corresponding lessening of influence on the part of academia. In his lengthy but extremely thorough first section of the book, titled "Theory, Criticism, Intellectual History," Lu addresses the confusion between the traditional and the postmodern that permeates every aspect of Chinese politics and culture in the wake of upheavals from the violence at Tiananmen Square to the return of Hong Kong from colonial British rule in 1997. While Lu acknowledges that post-socialist China's global position is fairly clear in terms of politics and economics, the cultural dimension is far more slippery and complex, and filled with contradictions that this book tries (mostly successfully) to delineate. China still operates under the ostensible stability of state rule, but the regime's policy of loosening economic restrictions (throughout the 1990s China became more and more integrated into the system of global capitalism) while tightening the grip on political freedom creates unusual problems for the country's artists and academics, as tastes are no longer dictated by the intellectual elite. Many of China's leading thinkers were forced into exile by the failure of the 1989 Democracy Movement, and an exploding culture industry has emerged to take their place, an industry that has found massive success with films, TV programs, best-selling books and pop music.

In this context, Lu defines transnational visuality as "the conventions and strategies of representing China in the postmodern age of global visual spectacles," and he includes many examples of such representations in order to explore the ways that China is perceived both by its own people and by the West (along with the ways in which the West is perceived by China). The films of the New Chinese directors and the oil paintings of "political pop" artists are particularly relevant to this topic, in that their importance in the global film festival and art markets contradicts their lack of visibility in their country of origin. The oil paintings of political pop, which combine concepts from American pop art with Chinese political icons, are censored on the mainland but earn their artists millions in the international marketplace (creating a contradiction on top of a contradiction, as critiques of commercialism become commercial products themselves). By the same token, the films of Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, and their peers are largely financed internationally rather than domestically, and Lu points out that the political content that makes these films nearly unscreenable in China is what makes them hits on the world film festival circuit—and that critics of both these movies and the political pop movement would argue that the works' success is motivated more by political than artistic considerations.

Although references to Chinese films occur throughout the volume, the author's most intensive discussions of movies occur in the book's second section, titled, appropriately enough, "Cinema." Lu focuses largely on the usual suspects—widely discussed filmmakers such as Zhang Yimou and Wong Kar-wai—but delves more deeply into questions

of national identity than most other Western writers on the topic. Rather than trying to provide a comprehensive survey of important Chinese movies in the 1990s, the writer chooses a handful of specific texts that serve to illuminate the implications of the ongoing exchange of images between China and the West. This approach is especially enlightening in the author's analysis of Zhou Xiaowen's 1994 film, *Ermo*, a film about a peasant woman's attempts to acquire the biggest TV set in her village. Lu uses the movie's deceptively simple narrative as a springboard for a discussion of global postmodern culture, addressing what the film has to say about China's consumption of Western television programs like "Dynasty"; Lu also explores what *Ermo*'s international success says about the international art film audience's desires and interests (like many of Zhang and Chen's hits, *Ermo* downplays China's urban, modern landscape to orientalize and exoticize itself for the world market). The complicated transnational exchange of images that *Ermo* represents both literally within its narrative and on a more abstract theoretical level is emblematic of the sort of postmodernity that Lu is interested in examining, a postmodernity often practiced by artists and intellectuals of "flexible citizenship." These people, often born in China but now residing in Western countries, are responsible for the ways in which China is represented to global audiences, and in appropriating postmodernism they've found ways of asking questions about national identity amidst the challenges that China faces in the new century.

The downside to Lu's selective approach in his discussion of cinema is that while the individual analyses are pointed and original, the films seem at times to exist in a bit of a vacuum—there's little real sense of the politics and business of the Chinese film industry, or of the individual movies' context in terms of Chinese cinema as a whole. Given the author's focus on mapping China's relationship not only to the global community but to itself, the limited attention given to the reception of the films under discussion in their own country seems to be a misstep. Still, this is a minor complaint given how strong the book is on the other end of the equation, as it provides an endlessly fascinating series of commentaries on stars such as Anita Mui and Maggie Cheung and their relationships to Western audiences. In a chapter titled *The Heroic Trio* (named after a famous Hong Kong action film and coauthored with Anne T. Ciecko), Lu takes a look at Olivier Assayas's brilliant *Irma Vep*, a French film starring Cheung that uses its tale of a Chinese star being fired from a French movie to unleash a complex series of discourses about the self and the other. Cheung, who grew up in Britain, represents a complicated collection of postcolonial dilemmas regarding cultural identity, and Assayas takes advantage of Cheung's real-life biography as well as her public persona to create what Lu calls "a witty commentary on the fluid boundaries of global media."

As part of its project to map the complex cultural relationship between China and the West, the book also offers some intriguing revisionist analyses of popular English-language films, analyses that illuminate the political and economic issues under discussion as well as the specific movies that the author references. Lu's examination of the 1997 James Bond movie, *Tomorrow Never Dies,* is particularly provocative and insightful as he explores how the film's tale of a media mogul's attempt to manufacture a war between China and Britain skillfully remaps the relationship between the two countries in the post-Cold War period. Lu also examines how the iconic figure of Michelle Yeoh, the Hong Kong action superstar who served as Pierce Brosnan's co-star in the Bond film, led Western audiences away from Suzie Wong stereotypes and toward a stronger image of Asian womanhood—and how, by extension, she challenged the Bond films' traditional sexism and misogyny. Of course, the irony is that in spite of the movie's attempt to place China and Britain on an equal level, it's still an "imperial film," with its successful release serving as a supreme example of the dominance of the Western media industry reinforced by a vast worldwide distribution network.

The subsequent sections of the book continue to define China's cultural landscape via the arts and entertainment, focusing on literature, soap operas, and avant-garde art. One of the book's greatest strengths is its complex approach to the relationship between academic theory and sociopolitical reality. Lu points out that while the Cultural Revolution may have been an inspiration for Western Marxist *theory*, the reality of it was a nightmare for the majority of Chinese citizens who lived through it. This may be an obvious observation in one sense, yet the author's approach is more complicated—he is able to acknowledge the tunnel vision of various schools of academic thought while still reinforcing the validity of those schools' insights. Lu also leads the way for intellectuals looking to place Chinese postmodernity in a context of recent academic thought, pointing out the unsettling alliance between popular culture, patriarchal discourse, and transnational capital that characterizes the Chinese media. One reason Zhang Yimou finds his films under constant attack by state officials is that they provide a devastating critique of Chinese masculinity—in a patriarchal society, Zhang's portrayals of men who are unable to function sexually or save their spouses and children are as incendiary as the films' overt political content.

The only downside to Lu's breadth is that at times the organization of the book seems a bit haphazard—key concepts such as transnational visuality are often defined a bit too late in the game, and sometimes discussions of individual works are split up across hundreds of pages when a more concentrated analysis might be more effective. This, however, is nitpicking, given the book's massive ambition and seriousness of thought, and in the end the author delivers on his promise to immerse the reader in late twentieth century China's cultural landscape. Ultimately the volume's greatest relevance comes from the fact that while it's both thorough and specific in terms of its detailed breakdown of Chinese art and culture, it nevertheless has a universal and timely theme: the question of whether or not nationalism is still relevant in the age of globalization. The addition of another question into the mix—what exactly are the intellectual and artist's roles in such a complex, ever changing cultural landscape?—makes *China, Transnational Visuality,*

Global Postmodernity a consistently informative and provocative work.

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Cinema India

The Visual Culture of Hindi Film

By Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002. $24.00.

Cinema India is a legitimately self-proclaimed first: a scholarly analysis of the aesthetics and iconography of Hindi popular film as markers of both national and cultural identities. As the authors put forth in their introduction, their aim is to "explore that visual culture, its production and reception, and its cultural, historic and aesthetic significance." Gratifyingly, the book fills in some holes in extant Hindi film publications—especially those of more recent years, which have employed ideological or political slants that are often overly complex and only marginally tied to the actual song-and-dance formula films that colorfully speckle the Indian landscape.

Rachel Dwyer, who has authored several books on Hindi film (most notably on the currently in vogue romance dramas), handles the historical overview of the industry and a close reading of two of its most tangible components of film style: settings and costumes. Divia Patel brings her palpable knowledge as an assistant curator in the Asian department of the Victoria and Albert Museum to the latter half of the book, with a historical account of film advertising and an in-depth analysis of the unmistakable, epically loud Hindi film poster.

Given *Cinema India*'s focus on the visual culture of Hindi film, its own production values are appropriately in sync: its high-gloss pages are chock-full of visuals, many in the rich, saturated colors that have come to define the contemporary Hindi film. If that seems like a trite concern on the part of this reviewer, it should be noted that just about every book on the subject up to this point has significantly lacked these qualities. Stills and images from this visually ripe industry have been infrequent in publications, and rarely have they appeared in the bold, vivid, sometimes kitschy, colors of their originals. In that respect, this book brings to its readers the visual stimulation, even hyper-stimulation, for which Bollywood (the Hollywood of Bombay) is famous, and this alone makes the book something of a requisite for Hindi film abecedarians. Indeed, the book's repeated mention of the significance to the genre of the cultural practice of *darshan*—that is, of a secularized Hindu "seeing," whereby a look is a *two-way* affair that transpires "between the devotee and the deity that establishes religious authority"—is just as applicable to the book's own visual content and format. For, if such movies invite "*darshan* by [their] use of tableaux," as the authors contend, then certainly denying readers those tableaux reduces the impact of what it means to engage with a Hindi film.

Looks are of course not enough, and it is in the textual department that *Cinema India* exhibits some unevenness. The book begins with promising lucidity and a compact but comprehensive introduction to the history of Indian cinema. "Indian Cinema," as chapter 1 is titled, tackles Hindi film's antecedents, its fragmentation into various subgenres (historicals, mythologicals, and stunt films), and even the misconceptions as regards its evolution as a national popular form. It appropriately debunks attempts by previous scholars to apply the rarefied *rasa* theory of aesthetic to the Hindi film and serves as a corrective to an earlier overemphasis on the "indigenous Indianness" of Hindi film—a viewpoint that doesn't adequately take into account all the multidirectional global flows of information, technology, fashion, culture, and such. Dwyer, instead, pays good attention to the century-long cross-pollination that resulted ultimately in the Hindi *masala* ("spice mix" formula) film: that is, the complex assortment of tensions, importations, and appropriations by and between colonizer and colonized, between north and south India, between Hindus and Muslims, nation and regions, state and individual, and Bollywood and Hollywood, to name a few. Here, too, is where the reader will find theoretical conjecture concerning the Hindi film's melodramatic form and its formulaic inclusion of song and dance, and will be introduced to the relationship between the Indian movie star and that aforementioned practice of *darshan*. Finally, the chapter addresses oft dismissed aspects of filmmaking in Indian popular cinema, such as distribution practices and working conditions.

It is in chapter 2, "Film Style: Settings and Costumes," that the book disappointingly falters—not because of its intentions but because it delimits those intentions too narrowly. Indeed, as the authors maintain, a book that deals with the aesthetics of Hindi film has been long overdue, but, by focusing in this chapter almost exclusively on settings and costumes, only lip service is paid to other very integral and equally, if not more, significant cinematic components of film style and language—mise-en-scène, editing, sound. True, much of value could be illuminated vis-à-vis the aesthetic of the Hindi film industry from a study of these two elements, and Dwyer does investigate some worthwhile territory: the uses (and abuses) of women's clothing as a means of reinforcing patriarchy, location as spectacle, and sites of modernity as signifiers of authority. Unfortunately, Dwyer's approach is far too descriptive—and non-chronologically so—and only thinly analytical. As such, the chapter feels highly anecdotal, bereft of the rest of the book's historical grounding. In fact, the chapter has the feel of a long magazine exposé rather than of scholarly critique. (I was not at all surprised to discover—in fact, suspicion led to my searching the acknowledgements for confirmation—that this section of the material had been published elsewhere, in a book called *Fashion Cultures*.) It is unfortunate that this chapter feels almost like a departure from the rest of the text's concerted effort to explore with greater historical rigor the many facets of Indian popular film's visual style.

Cinema India bounces back in chapter 3, however. The very substantive "The Art of Advertising" takes the reader on a chronological journey through the visual media that surrounded a century of Indian popular films. The aesthetic and ideological history of objects like newspaper ads, film booklets, and hoardings is included here, with surprisingly rich results. The development of the "Ravi Varma Aesthetic" (Varma being the artist who inadvertently grandfathered all Indian calendar art) is explored, as is the fascinating shape-shifting of styles due to such external influences as the Indian independence movement, differently minded colonial and homegrown schools of art, tides of internationalism, the internal Emergency crisis of the 1970s, and the computer technology of the 1990s. Further, Patel deftly demonstrates how, depending on the timing, pictorials, colors, designs (even textual fonts!) were able to signify nationalism and the glorious past—*or* Orientalism; modernity—*or* colonialism; a desire for technological advancement compounded by an all-out fear of cultural decline. Consideration is given here as well to the very osmotic, frequently touchy relationship between East and West apropos the appropriation and recasting of foreign styles. Incorporation of Art Deco elements, for example, and the abstract flash of the psychedelic posters of 1970s America are shown to be distinctly Indian borrowings—acquisitions reinterpreted in such a way as to offer up a kind of repatriation of modernity. Interwoven in this chapter's chronological approach is a very consistent thread on the representation of women—a significant and worthy theme, given that the nation-building ideology of India has long been tied up with the depiction of the female (e.g., as tradition-bearer, as "Mother India").

Chapter 4, "Advertising and the Communication of Meaning," offers a closer, albeit sometimes redundant, inspection of the "hierarchy of responses" elicited by film posters in India. The iconicity of stars in this "ocular era" is explored, with particular attention paid to the industry's biggest star to date, Amitabh Bachchan. Again, the practice of *darshan* emerges, as does consideration of the star's archetypal "constructed identity" through poster art. Most interesting perhaps is a related examination of a uniquely Indian aesthetic process known as overpainting, wherein oil paints are applied in "bold and distinct brush strokes" over a photographic portrait for the purposes of heightening the monumentality of the stars and, in this way, "embellishing and enhancing" reality. Finally, the chapter extends Bollywood-as-visual-culture into the realm of the global by investigating how the Hindi cinema has been itself coopted by "fine artists" both at home and abroad.

After such a cautious, non-essentialist look at Hindi film style, the book concludes with a somewhat rash pronouncement that the *filmi,* or highly formulaic, style of Hindi cinema is a "thing of the past and is considered to be the very antithesis of the new 'look.'" This pronouncement is based on a shortsighted, if not elitist, celebration of the increasingly global appeal of Indian films and the recent trend for "slick and sophisticated" romance and family dramas. However, the recent super-hit status in India of *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (*Rebellion: A Love Story* [2001]), which incorporates many *filmi* elements, warns against an academic myopia that privileges jet-set audiences at the expense of the urban poor who still comprise the bulk of Bombay filmgoing audiences at home.

Though *Cinema India* elides some of its very own objectives, it also well fulfills others, and for this reason, it is a welcome addition to the growing pantheon of books on Hindi popular film.

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Cinema 16

Documents Toward a History of the Film Society

By Scott MacDonald. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002. $79.50 cloth; $22.95 paper.

Again proving himself to be one of the most informed scholars of experimental film history, Scott MacDonald's latest work rigorously anthologizes an eclectic collection of primary documents surrounding Cinema 16, the largest and most influential of American film societies. MacDonald's elegance as a critic, as demonstrated by his *Avant-Garde Film Motion Studies* (Cambridge, 1993) as well as his latest, book-length reflection on the role of place in avant-garde cinema, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place* (University of California, 2001), is perhaps only rivaled by his skill as an archival historian, interviewer, and editor. Although MacDonald's interpretative insights are limited in this book to his lucid introduction and his direct interviewing style, the book resounds with his extensive contextual knowledge in the unobtrusive form of notes and parentheses, which continually guide the reader through omissions or enigmas in the documents themselves.

From 1947 to 1963, the New York-based Cinema 16 functioned as the primary exhibitor and distributor of experimental film in the United States. Under the leadership of Amos and Marcia Vogel, Cinema 16 flourished as a non-profit membership society committed to the exhibition of documentary, avant-garde, scientific, educational, and performance films to ever-increasing audiences. What emerges in MacDonald's collection of interviews, correspondence, program notes, critical and journalistic reviews of the film society, transcribed conversations, film stills, and graphics is a glimpse into the everyday culture of the postwar avant-garde, as well as a sense of Cinema 16 as *Gesamtkunstwerk*. While many of the included documents inevitably dwell upon material transactions, such as rental fees and shipping dates, the collection gradually reveals the depth of Amos Vogel's project: film programming as a total work of art designed to expose diverse, frequently hostile audiences to the myriad subversive potentials of the medium. Perennially refusing

to cater to the demands of the 7,000 members that belonged to Cinema 16 at its zenith, Vogel consistently labored to shock, educate, transfix, and even bore his audiences by challenging their social, aesthetic, and scientific assumptions through his eclectic selections and dialectical approach to presentation. By including such a wide range of documents, from intimate historical ephemera to more philosophical reflections on the role of the cinema, the audience, the noncommercial artist, and the nonprofit exhibitor, MacDonald's editorial montage captures the political impetus and sweeping aesthetic vision that invigorated Vogel's commitment to Cinema 16.

The competition from newer groups, as well as ongoing financial obstacles, resulted in the closure of Cinema 16 in 1963. In his introduction, MacDonald narrates the ways in which the arrival of both the Film-makers' Cooperative and the New American Cinema Group in the early 60s, as well as the escalating antagonism between Vogel and legendary avant-garde film guru Jonas Mekas, changed the focus of American experimental film culture. For these new groups, it was unthinkable that Vogel should remain the sole arbiter of which avant-garde films were available and how they were programmed. Instead of selecting films based exclusively upon a particular individual's evaluation, as detractors argued that Cinema 16 had, the Coop initiated a policy of accepting all films that were submitted to them by filmmakers. Within the new paradigm, the focus of experimental cinema curating shifted from attracting a diverse audience to showcasing a particular filmmaker. Rather than tempering the exhibition of abstract avant-garde works by inserting them in an eclectic program, as Vogel had done, the Coop dedicated itself to showing entire programs of individual experimental filmmakers. While there is no doubt that this kind of programming has helped audiences to recognize the integrity of an artist's vision, it has inevitably resulted in certain drawbacks. As the popular audience for non-commodity forms of cinema continues to diminish, the Sisyphean task of situating experimental filmmaking within the mainstream of cultural life becomes more onerous. Forty years after the closure of Cinema 16, Vogel's success at exposing simultaneous collective audiences to the subversive potential of the medium remains unparalleled.

What emerges through reading *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* is a profound nostalgia for the generation of cinephilia that Cinema 16 fostered. While the primary value of MacDonald's book is as a resource to be consulted by experimental film theorists and historians, the pleasure of reading it all the way through is tantamount to the best kind of epistolary novel, in which vivid characters emerge through their correspondence. It just so happens that Vogel's interlocutors include many of the most innovative artists of the twentieth century, including Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, Luis Buñuel, John Cassavetes, Joseph Cornell, Robert Flaherty, Gregory Markopoulos, Jean Renoir, and Fred Zinneman. In an era where email and the Internet have rendered the written letter a casualty of evolution, the intimacies, insights, and accusations traded in Vogel's voluminous correspondence read as if refracted through a prism of loss. MacDonald's book gracefully eulogizes this waning sense of community at the same time that it narrates one of the most significant developments in American film history.

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Dead Ringers

The Remake in Theory and Practice

Edited by Jennifer Forrest and Leonard R. Koos. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2002. $86.50 cloth; $29.95 paper.

Why is it important to discuss the film remake now? What is its historical context, its evolution and crosscultural transactions? Is the remake a populist attempt to create societal connection, recycling centuries-old emotions and attachments, or a copycat deadening in the face of economic bottom lines? In this era of mass markets and remake fever, these questions open up important issues about cultural memory and the desire to repeat the familiar. A number of books have recently emerged that dedicate themselves to exploring these issues, among them *Double Takes: Culture and Gender in French Films* (1998), by Carolyn A. Durham (who is also a contributor to *Dead Ringers*), and perhaps the best, Andrew Horton and Stuart McDougal's anthology, *Play It Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes* (1998). This latest addition, *Dead Ringers: The Remake in Theory and Practice*, although interesting in its details, is a less entertaining read.

Dead Ringers provides exhaustive historical information (especially in the area of early cinema), promotes a French-American specialized view of the remake industry, gives valuable space to a feminist reading of remakes, and initiates an interesting take on how sound can rewrite image (Tricia Welsh's "Sound Strategies" is a unique contribution to this volume). This collection achieves its goal of taking the remake out of "the purgatory of casual reference and the summary dismissal" and into the realm of serious film criticism, but it falls short in terms of delivering theoretical approaches which would enrich our understanding of the individual remakes explored in many of its essays (3). The opportunities for theory-building abound, but most of the editorial choices remain history-oriented (with the exception of Thomas Leitch and Laura Grindstaff). The editors also imply that the remake is a genre: "Once again, the American remake reveals its affinities with American culture as articulated in film genres" (7). This is in opposition to the more convincing claim by Michael Brashinsky who, in *Play It Again, Sam*, flatly states: "The remake is not a genre, nor is it a kind of film. It is neither a newly filmed old script nor a new script based on an old one. It is nothing but a film based

on another film that is itself a system of narrative and cinematic properties" (162). In claiming near genre status for the remake, Forrest and Koos ultimately undermine their larger theoretical paradigm of intertextuality, especially if the intertextual remake is understood as a form which is engaged in a "trialogue" with audience readings, critics' responses, and commercial markets (30). As Grindstaff points out at the end of the volume (echoing Brashinsky and others): "The remake is simultaneously a rich site for critical analysis precisely because its derivative status—its very secondariness and duplicity—forces a certain theoretical stock-taking of conventional notions of authorship, authenticity, and originality" (274).

Forrest and Koos use their critique of André Bazin's position—in which the integrity of the original source is preserved—to place the critical frame of intertextuality (where integrity is both preserved and violated) at the center of the book. This effort is continued in the leading essay by Thomas Leitch, "Twice-Told Tales: Disavowal and the Rhetoric of the Remake." For Leitch, the intertextuality of crosscultural translations of cinematic originals depends on a system of disavowal, i.e., the remake establishes its value by invoking earlier texts—simultaneously establishing intimacy with and distancing themselves from the original's flaws (53). Leitch believes that the disavowal of the remake is paradigmatic of all generic intertextuality, from formulaic genres like the Western and the musical to the discourses of colonialism: "Colonizing the other by effacing its otherness is a trope that . . . has become a founding move in the discipline of cultural studies" (57). This conflation of postcolonial theory with an aesthetic theory of cinematic remakes is intriguing, but is not developed in the context of this volume. Eight out of ten chapters deal with French films with very little attention paid to the influence of the East, such as Hong Kong (except for Grindstaff's cursory mention of *Nikita*'s Hong Kong remake), or Indian films, which might have made the postcolonial analysis more plausible.

A number of essays trace the genealogy of the remake back to the origins of cinema and cinema's invention: the physical nature of the cinematic loop and the psychological desire to make something again, only better. Forrest's essay on the "dupe" in early cinema is especially cogent in its address of early copyright (which didn't take hold until 1903), preservation impulses, and spectatorial influence on remakes. Other essays emphasize ways in which remake aesthetics are shaped by varying economies: the "industry" of remakes and corporate-inspired critical responses, historical contexts of production, and the ambiguous signatures of sequels (Michael Harney, Alan Williams, Koos). Marty Roth, by exploring the "repetition compulsion" of American horror film remakes, contributes to our understanding of the dialectical relationship of original to copy (237).

The gendered readings performed in several essays, including one of the editors' (Jennifer Forrest's "Originals, Remakes, Genre and Star Personas"), are especially compelling. Forrest's essay effectively shows how the intertextuality of Classic Hollywood's star system operated in order to replay, again and again, a kind of timeless "feminine" through the good-bad girl character of Sadie Thompson. From Gloria Swanson to Joan Crawford to Rita Hayworth, Sadie Thompson's "good-girl-down-on-her-luck" is updated for particular historical audiences, becoming more femme fatale with each remake. Still, Sadie's "badness" is always circumstantial, never essential (she just needs the right man to understand/guide/marry her). In short, postwar remake practices often worked to "induce a climate of overall moral as well as historical continuity," especially when it came to female sexuality and gender roles (195). Like Forrest, Carolyn Durham, in "Three Takes on Motherhood, Masculinity, and Marriage," points to several different versions of a gendered situation, in this case, child-rearing and motherhood, and examines what happens to each element as it is transmuted in different cultural contexts (again primarily an American vs. French study). Coline Serreau's *Trois Hommes et un couffin* (1985), Leonard Nimoy's *Three Men and a Baby* (1987), and Emile Ardolino's *Three Men and a Little Lady* demonstrate the particularly complex ways in which gender is refigured as a transitional, more pluralistic discourse than is usually represented in mono-national feminist debates (257).

Finally, Laura Grindstaff delivers one of the most sophisticated essays of the volume—"Pretty Woman with a Gun: *La Femme Nikita* and the Textual Politics of 'the Remake.'" This is rich both in terms of remake theory and intermedia observations. Using the paradigm of translation as a way to think about cinematic remakes, Grindstaff is able to argue at the level of both structure (the remake as structural repetition) and history (through the "twin concepts of fidelity and betrayal") (277). Moreover, she uses psychoanalysis to address the "failure of translation" or the impulse of translators to "operate as doubles" as they remake a work. This is helpful in understanding how the power of one country (the U.S). to remake the "other" (France) recreates the sometimes hostile and complex Imaginary relationship between copy and original (the failure to distinguish self from other) as described by Jacques Lacan (301). In step with Leo Braudy (in his wonderfully smart essay "Afterword: Rethinking Remakes," in *Play It Again, Sam*) and Brashinsky (and against the grain of many of *Dead Ringers*' authors), Grindstaff says that "the film remake is not itself a genre," and she uses its divided nature and its liminal qualities, which enable it to "cut across mediums and cultures," to explore the case of *La Femme Nikita* (Luc Besson, 1990). Its reincarnations, from French film to Hong Kong action film to Hollywood remake and finally to an American television series in the 1990s, map the structures of iterability which exist not just across cultures but across different media. What is most refreshing about this essay is that it points to the illusive quality of a remake—that indeed there is much that is untranslatable about the "seed or nucleus of a text" or film, so that its ability to be remade is more about cultural fertility than about textual fidelity (302).

In short, *Dead Ringers* gives a fresh look at the notion of the remake primarily by looking at the plethora of Hollywood remakes which come out of France, but this decidedly narrow focus curtails its larger ambitions of offering a truly international perspective. Its title, by pointing to

David Cronenberg's nasty and exhilarating tale of twinness and troubled doubleness, promises to be a lively and contemporary read of the fascination our culture has for sameness, repetition, and familiarity, but instead we're given a safe and classical ride through industry politics and largely auteur examples. As Cronenberg says, "the fact that Elliot and Beverly are identical twins is their evolution into something monstrous" (*Cronenberg on Cronenberg*, London: 1997, 144). The remake, subjected to the editorial gaze of Forrest and Koos, is a tame but misunderstood animal, colonized, mistranslated, and ultimately sold down the river as a genre.

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Fire and Desire

Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era

By Jane M. Gaines. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. $49.00 cloth; $19.00 paper.

In 2001, thanks to decades of tireless work by a dedicated community of film historians and archivists, a group of restored films by African-American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux premiered at the 19th Annual Silent Film Festival in Pordenone, Italy. *Fire and Desire: Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era* not only contextualizes and analyzes the history of these "lost films" by Micheaux, the most famous of the African-American race movie pioneers who made silent films for the segregated theater circuit, it also integrates film history, film theory, and cultural studies in surprising ways, making it one of the most sophisticated and engaging books of film studies published in recent memory. Jane Gaines' book represents a major contribution not only to our historical understanding of the films of African-American producer/directors like Oscar Micheaux and Noble Johnson, but also to our theoretical understanding of race, mimesis, the gaze, spectatorship, and identity.

Race movies (or mixed-race movies, as Gaines renames them) trouble the dominant practice of evaluating films according to criteria of auteurship and artistic brilliance; they also foreground the question of silence in silent film (what Peter Brooks has called "the resonance of silence"); and they compel us to critically evaluate our theories about film melodrama. Yet perhaps the most challenging way that mixed-race movies upset standard film history and film theory is through the dismantling of the fixed notion of "race." Although J. Hoberman has celebrated the experimental aesthetic of the films of Micheaux, many critics have noted Micheaux's preference for casting light-skinned actors, and thus are disturbed by his films' representations of class and gender. Gaines writes:

> Race movies aspired to a condition of blackness from top to bottom and celebrated striving and loving and laughing in an all-black world. In their heyday, race movies took something from every existing Hollywood genre; thus it is difficult to generalize about them in terms of narrative structure, although, as I do argue, in every way imaginable they espoused uplift. And one of the unspoken ways in which they advocated uplift was in their consistent use of what could be called the "light-skinned aesthetic." It is not only that the black press noted the preference for light over dark-skined heroes and heroines in these films, but that contemporary viewers in discussions following restrospective screenings invariably question the prevalence of light skin on the screen. The paradox of race movies is that they celebrate blackness, but blackness as performed by actors who *look almost white*. In race movies, while blackness is celebrated, the lightness that flirts with passing, that is almost a "play" on passing, suggests that the celebration is toned down (17).

A conservative black middle-class value of "uplift" seems to underlie most of Micheaux's work, and yet Gaines points out that "whiteness" and "blackness" are shown to be artificially constructed, since light-skinned blacks played white characters, as well as black characters passing for white, and/or blacks who are mistaken for white.

Because of the disturbing suggestion of a hierarchy of skin tones in the films, and because of their lack of traditional high Hollywood production values, mixed-race movies have not been fully embraced by scholars yearning to find and promote a long-lost black auteur, a black Griffith. Gaines' book allows us to move beyond that kind of valuation; instead she reveals to us how these films contest the ways film theory addresses questions of racial difference. She writes: "Significantly, one of the themes of this book is the impossibility of knowing, the ambiguity of the concept of race as well as the difficulty of determining who is what. So race *does* matter, and yet there have historically been and will continue to be ways in which it does not. Race does/doesn't matter" (11).

In order to delve into how race does/doesn't matter, Gaines begins with a meditation on the cinema essays of one of the most brilliant cultural critics of all time, James Baldwin, whose writings from his autobiographical *The Devil Finds Work* long anticipated later postcolonial interventions into the misread or mimicked response of the despised Colonial Other as well as the dis-identified critics of queer theory. Among other divine and deviant divas, Baldwin located Joan Crawford as black, and identified with the frog-eyed ugliness of Bette Davis. Gaines launches from a critique of Christian Metz's notion of identification in "The Imaginary Signifier" to the problem of what she calls the politics of mirroring, "a politics that asks why the bodies of blacks and women are missing from the screen, or why, if they are not missing, they are unrecognizable to the people they are supposed to represent" (25).

Gaines then moves on in chapter 2 to trouble yet another foundation of film theory, the gaze, by reexamining Hegel's understanding of Desire and the Other through her analysis of the first interracial kiss in Edwin S. Porter's *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903). In this short film, a white man sitting with a white woman and her black maid on a train is accidentally caught kissing the maid after the train emerges from a tunnel, leading Gaines to ruminate on what she calls her central premise, "that identification in the cinema is about the transformation of difference into identity and, corollary to this, in the largest sense Desire has to do with overcoming differences" (20). In the Hegelian self-other structure, "opposites pass over into each other," but in the encounter between the white woman and the black maid, Gaines perceives no mirror encounter, and argues that the "fantasy of the indistinguishability between master and slave is just that—a fantasy" (90).

Chapter 3 investigates the years 1903 to 1931 to explore the history of black-produced films of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company and the Micheaux Book and Film Company. Even here Gaines challenges the narrativizing of film history. She also discusses how the lack of existing reels of completed films by the Lincoln Company, a fact which most would consider a kind of lack of history, forces the historian to reconsider the status of the surviving plot summaries. Moreover, Gaines explains the race movies' underlying purpose of rendering visibility:

> For the early African American film pioneers, the chance to tell their stories on film, in public, to each other, but also to white audiences wherever possible, was a chance to tell themselves into existence as a group, to constitute themselves as a visible group in the way they wanted to be seen. At this moment and for these people there is a double move—on the one hand a rejection of the white version of the American Negro, on the other hand a consolidation and a constitution of race identity. This double, two-pronged move from the minority position is the strategy that has been so productive in the history of African American culture. To conceive of the assertion of African American culture as a double strategy is to insist on the productiveness of the negation, which we would not want to underestimate (106).

In chapter 4, Gaines addresses the criticism of black films as being mere imitations of white film (the notion of "uplift") as the ability to become oneself by becoming the Other, a form of utopian reaching, moderated as it is by black middle-class influence, returning again to the troubling notion of how the mixed-race film used light-skinned blacks to stand for an aspiring black middle class. She then ends her book with three masterful chapters which do nothing less than confront the dominant film history that glorifies *The Birth of a Nation*, D.W. Griffith's infamous white supremacist film, as one of the first triumphs of classical Hollywood narrative. Gaines achieves this by contextualizing the latter film with other buried histories: in chapter 5 by analyzing the history of Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* (1920); in chapter 6 by examining the hidden secrets of the interracial body both in history and in film; and in chapter 7 through exposing the workings of censorship in consideration with audience response.

It would be difficult to excise *The Birth of a Nation* from the study of film history, and those of us who, disturbed by the film's numerous scenes of African Americans as degraded bestial creatures who lust after, rape, or ruin white Americans, debate whether or not to screen it in our film history survey classes, can now also screen at the same time an alternative representation of the same history, *Within Our Gates*. Micheaux's film, controversial in 1920 because of its depiction of the hanging and burning of two innocent African Americans (a man and his wife), met with protest from both blacks and whites. As Gaines points out, protests against *The Birth of a Nation* by the NAACP were on charges of false representation, whereas *Within Our Gates* was run out of town because of the fear of "too much truth" (162): its raw depiction of real violence touched a nerve in the concurrent climate of lynching and mob violence in the South, and desperate employment and housing conditions in the North. Besides depicting how *Within Our Gates* is the antithesis of *The Birth of a Nation*, Gaines also delves into issues of technology and African-American aesthetics in order to reflect on Micheaux's often problematic representation of class.

Chapter 6, "The Body's Story," continues Gaines' examination of *Within Our Gates* in order to analyze how the light-skinned heroine Sylvia Landry is almost raped by her own white father, Armand Girdlestone. As he rips her shirt open, a scar on her breast reveals that Sylvia is his own legitimate daughter from marriage to a black woman. The depiction of interracial sexuality discredits *The Birth of a Nation*'s silence over the fact that the light-skinned African Americans so vilified in Griffith's film were in fact often fathered by white men of the plantation class. Race is often never seen, argues Gaines (Girdlestone cannot recognize his own resemblance in his daughter): in Micheaux's *The Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920), the male protagonist Van Allan does not recognize that his beloved Eve is black.

In her final chapter, Gaines delineates the history of reception of the infamous Gus chase scene in *The Birth of a Nation* (in which a white Southern girl is chased by a sexually monstrous black man). The spectators who threw eggs at the screen during the scene are termed "mimetic spectators" by Gaines, in opposition to the censors of *The Birth of a Nation* who, afraid of interracial sexuality, never actually viewed the Gus chase scene. Here Gaines details how the image produces effects. The hatred of one film—*The Birth of a Nation*—produces the possibilities of another film—*Within Our Gates*:

> Race movies in their day were monumental attempts by blacks to "image back," to return the image of themselves given them by whites, to "face off" against white-produced "blackface." . . . it is in the project of "imaging back" that we see the

> mimetic faculty in all of its genius. In Micheaux's case, to show the brutal acts that whites have historically perpetrated against blacks is to "manipulate reality by means of its image," to use imitation in an attempt to magically influence present and future events. Here it is that we see the mimetic powers of the body extended to those of the cinema where the projective powers of the machines of repetition throw up their imitations again and again and again. Race movies, which we have seen as an elaborate paralleling of things white, can also be understood according to Michael Taussig's definition of mimesis as "slipping into Otherness, trying it on for size." Race movies were a *magical* inhabitation of white forms, deriving their power from that which blacks were not, using that power to become what they wanted to be. Black race movie pioneers brought about change by means of an imaginative incorporation, not a simple assimilation (255).

Fire and Desire also represents a monumental attempt to "image back" the history of African-American-produced silent movies in order to force us to reconsider our notions of film history, film spectatorship, and race, class, sexuality, and gender identification in film theory. The book is a splendid achievement and deserves to be read by anyone who is passionate about film.

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Groove Tube

Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion

By Aniko Bodroghkozy. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001. $64.00 cloth, $19.95 paper.

In *Groove Tube*, Aniko Bodroghkozy considers how television portrayed the social unrest of the 60s youth movement in primetime programming. The networks became what Bodroghsky defines as a "groove tube" to lure the baby boomers back to the medium that figured prominently in their youth (5). The book argues that this transition was anything but smooth for both the TV industry and the viewing public. Placing the dissension over TV's representation of the new youth in context with the turbulent social landscape of the 1960s, Bodroghkozy asserts that the networks engaged in an "ideological balancing act" to appeal to both the new and older generation (165). The extent to which TV shows adhered to this model would prove either their triumph or downfall. Bodroghkozy argues that in order to completely understand the counterculture and New Left of the 1960s, it is necessary to deconstruct the meanings behind their media representations.

The book is structured as a timeline for the baby boomer generation's interaction with television, beginning with "Howdy Doody" in the 1950s and culminating with the 1970/1971 season of what the networks enthusiastically declared as socially "with it" programming (204). Baby boomers baffled the networks by abandoning television as they entered adulthood. Identifying the youth market as the most desirable consumer group for TV, network executives had to acknowledge the changing social climate to appeal to a younger audience. Thus, network programming attempted to embrace the youth culture of the 60s out of economic necessity.

Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony figures significantly in Bodroghkozy's analysis with his notion of a cultural "crisis of authority," in which dominant ideology is rejected as common sense. In this context, television is an integral component of the cultural hegemony that is negotiated within popular culture (16-17). Hence, the youth rebellion's repudiation of the white, middle-class values of their parents also included cultural products of the establishment, including the TV medium. The ideology manifested in TV was precisely what the counterculture and New Left were rebelling against. To counter this crisis, the networks developed new youth-oriented shows.

Bodroghkozy uses "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" and "The Mod Squad" as case studies to demonstrate the ideological balancing act of primetime television. The Smothers' liberal politics and controversial guests, such as Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, contributed to the show's abrupt cancellation in March of 1969. By aligning their political alliances with the Left, the Smothers narrowed their audience appeal in a move CBS defined as "a matter of bad taste" (153). Consequently, "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" was caught in the "crisis of authority." Tom Smothers' attempt to fight against the establishment (network censorship) failed. In contrast, Bodroghkozy maintains that Aaron Spelling's "The Mod Squad" succeeded by appealing to both a young and an older audience. The use of fictional characters struggling with the social dislocations of the 60s was less hostile than the Smothers' more overt tactics. Attracting the older generation, the Captain Greer character exemplified a "great white father" figure who legitimized the rebellious behavior of the baby boomers (169). For Bodroghkozy, the brilliance of "The Mod Squad" was its visual forum for the "working out of insoluble social and generational conflict" to render a sympathetic portrayal of 1960s youth (169).

Bodroghkozy relies primarily on press discourse to exemplify the reception of youth-oriented programming, citing the underground press to illustrate the voice of the youth movements. Bolstering her argument, Bodroghkozy underscores the importance of underground newspapers such as New York's *East Village Other*, *Seed* from Chicago, and Berkley's *Tribe* as a voice for the counterculture and New Left on the debate over the portrayal of youth on primetime TV. Yet Bodroghkozy's focus on the underground press for primary source material limits the scope of her analysis on 60s youth programming. Ironically, such youth dissent can

be read as an affirmation of young, white manhood. Bodroghkozy's use of the underground press represents a marginal population of 1960s youth, and she neglects to take into account alternative responses to network programming, suggesting the need for further research in this area.

Ultimately, Bodroghkozy argues that sitcoms of the 1970s embodied the social changes of the 60s on primetime TV. Citing successful sitcoms such as the class-conscious "All in the Family" and the antiwar "M*A*S*H" as paragons of progressive programming, Bodroghkozy maintains these two shows satirized key American institutions contested by 60s youth, such as the family and the military. Mirroring the success of "The Mod Squad," Bodroghkozy stresses that a controversial show like "All in the Family" succeeded by achieving the ideological balancing act. While Bodroghkozy provides some analysis on the acceptance of 60s social politics in 1970s programming, the bulk of her program analysis concentrates on 1960s television, primarily "The Smothers Brothers" and "The Mod Squad."

Bodroghkozy discusses all factions of the youth movement to illustrate the relationship between TV and 1960s rebellion. Although she devotes much attention to "The Smothers Brothers" and "The Mod Squad," these shows generated the most discussion from the underground press, bolstering their significance as examples of 1960s TV that resonated with the youth rebellion. Thus, television did not alienate 60s youth, but rather created programs marketed to a young audience. While these television shows may not have accurately reflected 1960s youth culture and New Left movements, *Groove Tube* confirms that the networks made a conscious effort to expand its audience by making TV programming relevant to 1960s youth culture-cum-market.

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Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen

By Yosefa Loshitzky. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001. $50.00 cloth; $21.95 paper.

Israel is a multicultural nation; one-fifth of its population is Palestinian (Muslim, Christian, and Druze), and the Jewish population emigrated there from places as far as India, Siberia, Argentina, and South Africa. But Israel was established as a result of the Zionist movement, a Jewish national movement, which emerged—and was fashioned after—European national movements. The Holocaust, and later the establishment of Israel, resulted in massive waves of Jewish immigration from Europe and the Middle East, which were subsumed into a strong melting pot mentality, with Zionist ideals defining both a new Jew and Israeli society. Palestinians who stayed in Israel were classified as Israeli Arabs and treated as second-class citizens. In the early 1990s, however, the political hegemony of Zionism started to fissure at the seams, and since then there has taken place a sobering process of examination of Zionism and its ideological formations of inclusions and exclusions. These activities could be described in the political lingo of the day as identity politics movements.

Identity politics calls attention to the ways in which power circulates, to the workings of stereotypes and social classifications, and finally to the very different experiences of different groups vis-à-vis the state and its institutions. Yet unlike other social movements, identity politics is philosophically grounded in the individual, and in the belief that the personal is political. Yosefa Loshitzky epitomizes this approach in a fascinating book, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*. The book provides an analysis of Zionist cultural institutions, and then charts the challenges to those hegemonic texts by looking at films made by second-generation survivors of the Holocaust and by Oriental Jews, and at films that represent the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, particularly as it manifests in (forbidden) cross-ethnic love affairs. While those are but some of the groups marginalized by the political and cultural discourse of Zionism, Loshitzky's limited focus enables her to perform a detailed and methodical analysis of those groups, and as such to make a strong case—albeit not comprehensive to all of Israeli culture—about identity politics and its workings in Israel.

The book is informed not only by identity politics discourse, but also by postcolonial theories, Edward Said's seminal work on Orientalism, feminism, and more locally by the discussions about post-Zionism and the New Historians' debate. As such, the book offers a critical look at Zionism from the perspective of those who were never quite part and parcel of it. Loshitzky's scope is cinema, but she discusses theater, music, and performance art wherever applicable, and to an extent the book serves as an analysis of Israeli culture, with film being just one example of it. Loshitzky discusses documentaries and fiction films together, and her textual analysis does not treat them as unique genres, with specific veridical relations to historical reality. While such a treatment is non-conventional, I think that in the context of this project it is justifiable, as Loshitzky treats both fictional characters and documentary figures as social agents, representatives of identity groups.

The analysis is never reductive (to one identity aspect), and Loshitzky maintains a complexity whereby one's gender, ethnicity, and social background all play a part in what may be called a battlefield of identity facets. Such is the case when she discusses Asher Tlalim's *Don't Touch My Holocaust,* a film that focuses on a play about the Holocaust, but also includes Tlalim's own journey to Morocco (where his family came from), and his attempt to address the relationship of Oriental Jews to the Holocaust. Similarly, when discussing Nissim Dayan's *On a Very Narrow Bridge,* Loshitzky analyzes the attraction of the Oriental Jewish protagonist to the Christian Palestinian in terms that transcend the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and examine the tensions between the protagonist's Oriental background and his attempts to merge into the Ashkenazi (European) hegemonic power system.

To set the ideal new Jew of the Zionist project, Loshitzky interestingly chose to analyze Otto Preminger's (Hollywood) production of *Exodus*. The analysis focuses on the creation of the myth of the establishment of Israel—which was based on the supposed eradication of the old Jew (i.e., European and diasporic)—symbolically represented by the death of Karen, the Aryan-looking Holocaust survivor. At the same time, the "Uncle Tom" Arab, Taha, dies too, as a sacrificial lamb on the altar of the establishment of the new state. If *Exodus* sets the tone, the films discussed afterwards represent a myriad of counter-examples to this official and mythic narrative. The following two chapters discuss the Holocaust, its memory and experience, particularly with respect to the second generation. Films like *Don't Touch My Holocaust*, *Because of That War,* and *Choice and Destiny* deal with the memory, the silencing of the Holocaust experience during the early years of Israel, and finally the telling of the stories, mostly at the prodding of the survivors' children, now turned filmmakers. The book then turns to *Shchur*, a controversial mid-1990s film written by, and featuring, a Moroccan Jewish woman, Hanna Azulay Hasfari. Although ethnographic in its looks, the film uses both realism and fantastic styles to challenge hegemonic (Western) realist aesthetics in cinema, while at the same time claiming a place as an Israeli film, and not just an Oriental (or marginalized) phenomenon. In an analysis of *My Michael*, Loshitzky compares the representation of the Palestinian characters and the Israeli woman protagonist. Using feminist criticism, as well as Said's (anti-) Orientalist formulation, Loshitzky compares the woman and the Palestinians in both the writing of the novel by Amos Oz and the making of the movie by Dan Wolman. Finally, analyzing a large group of films in which interethnic romance between Israeli Jews and Arabs is foregrounded, Loshitzky shows the economy of identity and sexual politics as it pertains not only to the conflict, but also to sexual orientation, and to the Oriental-Western dynamics within Israeli culture. To name just a few of the films discussed, the list includes *Hide and Seek, On a Narrow Bridge, Hamsin,* and *Day After Day.*

I find these kinds of readings very productive as far as charting out political terms of engagement in the Israeli social fabric, and I believe that Loshitzky's analysis is excellent, exposing the need to give voice to Otherness, as well as to how power circulates. But exactly because the book provides such a thorough example of identity politics, I think it also exposes the limits of such an approach. While Loshitzky's analysis is never reductive, a reading of film texts as always representative of such facets of identity is bound to "thin out" the text into symbolic terms. That is, the characters, filmmakers, and interviewees of documentaries all come to stand in for identity markers, and as complex as those may be, their representativeness empties out the richness of lived experiences. When every gesture (be it aesthetic or not) is read as a political stance, life and poetry have little breathing room. But in life, as well as in art, it seems that the personal is political exactly by virtue of being an abundant lived experience, and only consequently, a symbolic or representative one. The films Loshitzky discusses do exemplify identity politics at work, but I believe they also provide the viewer with other experiences, ones that do not translate so readily into political terms. Still, putting aside those objections to identity politics at large, the book is an extremely useful contribution to the study of Israeli cinema, culture, and history. It is well written, well researched, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in a critical reading of Israeli society.

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Invisible Natives

Myth and Identity in the American Western

By Armando José Prats. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002. $53.50 cloth; $21.95 paper.

In *Invisible Natives*, Armando José Prats examines the cultural representation of American Indians in the Hollywood Western. Through the medium of cultural studies and a careful reading of film texts, he provides fresh insights into some familiar territory.

Prats asserts that the essential cultural myth for the United States is what he terms the Myth of Conquest, in which white settlers (or the Same in Prats's vocabulary) must tame the frontier and make it secure for progress and civilization. But this creation of an Eden in the West is blocked by the savagery and barbarism of the Indian (or the Other), in whose opposite the dominant culture seeks to define its cultural identity. In the historic West this process consists of killing the Indian and driving him from the land, while in the cultural representation of the Hollywood Western this transformation takes place by rendering the Indian invisible.

This argument is introduced through a discussion of *Northwest Passage* (1940), and, indeed, one of the strengths of this book is that Prats introduces his readers to some nontraditional Western film texts. In his analysis of *Northwest Passage*, Prats concentrates upon the character of Langdon Towne (Robert Young), who has joined Major Robert Rogers (Spencer Tracy) and his Rangers on their errand into the wilderness to discover a waterway across the continent. Towne is an artist, and one of his goals on this mission is to sketch the natives in their environment. While Towne ends up killing many Indians, it is interesting that we see no drawings of them in his sketchbook. Instead, the camera offers us sketches of Rogers, the Indian fighter who claims superior knowledge of Indian culture and customs. In the sketchbook of Towne, which may be perceived as metaphor for film's silver screen, the Native is replaced by the conqueror who appropriates Indian ways (or savagery) in order to subdue the frontier. In reality, the conqueror is seeking to abrogate the fact that savagery is part and parcel of the white culture and

Myth of Conquest. Nonetheless, shedding the brutality necessary to achieve civilization will become a major problem for the white hero.

Prats goes on to argue that the Western has rendered the Indian invisible through the use of synecdoche. Rather than actually presenting the Indian, his savagery is displayed through such symbols as the arrow, lance, smoke signals, and tomahawk. Thus, in John Ford's classic *Stagecoach* (1939), simply the word Geronimo spoken by a white man is enough to cause fear and panic among the other whites. These symbols of the Indian establish the imminent Native threat to civilization, while his virtual absence assures the eventual triumph of the whites and banishment of the Indian from Eden and history.

Invisibility is also attained through denying the Indian perspective. The gaze is bestowed upon the white man, who perceives the land as his space to possess, while the Indian is assigned to the periphery or savage borders which must be conquered by the white hero. When the Indian is given a limited perspective, it always confirms the evil of the Other's gaze. The hero's quest is "to eliminate that gaze and replace it with his own" (91). This principle is well developed in the threat that miscegenation may take place through the rape of white women. Accordingly, in a film such as D.W. Griffith's *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* (1914), when Indians besiege a cabin, the symbol of white civilization, the whites are prepared to kill their women to spare them the fate of being possessed by savages (although Prats does not mention that Griffith includes a similar scene in *The Birth of a Nation*, except that in this case the Other is black). And even in a post-World War II Western such as *The Unforgiven* (1960), Rachel (Audrey Hepburn) kills her biological Indian brother Lost Bird (Carlos Rivas) so that she may marry her adoptive brother Ben (Burt Lancaster). The redemptive gaze of Ben rescues Rachel from ethnicity, and she is able to embrace white culture.

Perhaps Prats's greatest contribution to discourse on the Western is his interpretation of the revisionist Indian Westerns ranging from *Broken Arrow* (1950) to *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Such films may not be as sympathetic to the Indian as many viewers want to believe, for Prats convincingly argues that the Indian-killing hero and the revisionist hero sympathetic to the Indian's plight are simply differing sides of the same coin. Thus, Prats emphasizes continuity rather than historical evolution in the Hollywood Western. In the revisionist films, the gifts of voice and perception still belong to the white hero, who laments the passing or vanishing of the noble Native. The revisionist white hero assimilates the positive cultural values of the Indians and creates an Eden, becoming, in essence, the first American. The revisionists thus use nostalgia for the noble Indian to assuage white guilt and create an American garden which is home to the white community.

However, the cultural divestment of the savagery which was so essential to conquering the West does not prove to be such a simple transformation. In the second half of his book, Prats introduces the ambiguity of the "Double Other." In this complicated discourse, Prats notes that the hero of the canonical Western is able to defeat the Indian by thinking, fighting, and acting like the savage Other. But what if cultural divestment is a myth, and the hero, along with the white culture which he represents, is unable to shed his savagery, which has been falsely attributed to the Indian?

This perspective is perhaps best understood by taking a look at John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956). In his quest to recover his captive niece Debbie (Natalie Wood) from the Comanche, Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) succumbs to barbarism by scalping his Indian antagonist Scar (Henry Brandon). But through this violent action and his "Indianness," Edwards appears to restore Debbie to her "whiteness." However, in the final scene of the film, Edwards is unable to enter the cabin when he returns Debbie to the white community. Instead, he turns and walks away into the uncivilized frontier, and the door of civilization closes upon the lone figure. While this concluding shot is subject to multiple readings, Prats suggests that Edwards is rejected by the white society because he reminds them of the violent history on which the community was founded. Like the Natives, the conquering hero must be made invisible so that civilization may ignore its origins in brutal conquest. But is it really possible to negate this history? As the United States embarks upon new international military adventures, it is well worth considering Prats's conclusion that America as a nation "had to appropriate—and by appropriating destroy—another culture in order to acquire its own identity" (287).

In his emphasis upon the role assigned to the Indian in the formation of America's cultural and racial mythology, Prats fails to consider other racial identities within the American experience. In fact, he is somewhat critical of films such as *Soldier Blue* (1970) for reducing Native Americans to stand-ins for the Vietnamese. Perhaps this seems narrow minded on his part, but he may have a point in that in our efforts to use the Indian as representative of the Vietnamese, Communists, or other American bogeymen, we are again guilty of rendering the Native invisible and ignoring the brutality of the American creation myth.

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Lillian Gish

Her Life, Her Legend

By Charles Affron. New York: Scribner's, 2001. $35.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

During much of her long lifetime, Lillian Gish was widely regarded as the greatest actress of the silent screen. That estimate was based on the films she made from 1912 (*The Unseen Enemy*) to 1928 (*The Wind*). She appeared in 23 Biograph films and features directed by D.W. Griffith. Of her remaining seven silent films, the most important were *La Boheme* (1926), directed by King Vidor, and *The Scarlet*

Letter (1926) and *The Wind*, both directed by Swedish director Victor Seastrom. With Griffith's encouragement, she also directed a film, *Remodeling Her Husband* (1920), with her sister Dorothy Gish and James Rennie. Lillian Gish was 35 in 1928; she had 64 years to live. During that time, she had occasional critical successes on the stage, in films, and on television, and wrote a book, but she never attained again anything close to the artistic summit of her appearances in silent film.

To his earlier books, *Star Acting: Gish, Garbo, Davis*; *Cinema and Sentiment*; and *Divine Garbo*, Charles Affron now adds *Lillian Gish: Her Life, Her Legend*. Affron's research was wide ranging, but what makes his book especially revealing is his resort to the newly available Lillian Gish papers in the Billy Rose Theatre Collection of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Affron skillfully weaves the new material with his other research and with information about Gish's life and career that has long been available. The result is by far the most detailed account of Gish's work and life available. There is new information at virtually every period of her work and life: clearing up her actual year of birth, when she met Griffith, and the first film in which she appeared, etc. The book's most sustained contribution concerns her work after the silent film period. Her roles in every play in which she appeared are detailed, as are her film roles, however small, and her television appearances. The result is a seamless and definitive account of Lillian's 99 years and five months. What is negative in the new Gish materials, Affron drops in at the chronological place in the overall narrative of her life. On some points he comments; on others, he does not.

Lillian's great performances in Griffith films (and in her later silent work) had inspired a number of well-known writers. Poet Vachel Lindsay praised not only Griffith but also Gish in his 1915 book *The Art of the Motion Picture*. He says of the actress, "Lillian Gish could be given wings and a wand if she only had directors and scenario writers who believed in fairies." Later, well-known 20s writers James Branch Cabell and Joseph Hergesheimer were much taken with Gish, and each made her a character in one of their novels. Cabell's steamy *Jurgen*, published in 1919, banned in 1920, and republished in 1922, was a mediaeval fantasy that included a Gish-inspired character named Queen Helen. She was, notes Affron, "an appropriately chaste figure . . . the image of the untouchable, unblemished, uncorrupt woman, so often at the center of Griffith's imagination, and so often incarnated by Lillian." Hergesheimer had a friendship with Gish that was closer and more long-lasting than Cabell's had been. Unlike so many other writers who, before and after him, extolled the ethereal Lillian, he grasped that it was a mistake to consider her fragile. "All who knew her well rapidly came to this conclusion," notes Affron. "'Steely resolve' was a far better fit than 'airy wistfulness.'" Hergesheimer put a character inspired by Lillian in his 1922 novel *Cytherea*. Named Mina Raff, she is presented as a woman who has "a very sure and perfect talent," but whose desire to work is all-consuming and precludes affective attachments that might frustrate that desire. An older character tells a younger man infatuated with Mina, "If you imagine for an instant that your love will be bigger than her work, if you suppose that, against her acting, it will last, you are an idiot for your pains." Affron comments: "He accurately analyzes the priorities of Lillian Gish."

The next phase of biographies of Gish shows just how carefully, for close to 70 years, she shaped the image of herself that she wished to propagate. This includes her own countless interviews, a vast number of articles written about her, and two biographies written by men in love with her, or with her image in films. The first was a short book in a series devoted to contemporary, mainly literary, figures—*Lillian Gish: An Interpretation* (1927) by Edward Wagenknecht, then a young college professor. He saw Gish as "the Puritan of the of the movies," whom he appreciates for her lack of "sensual allure." "It is the Puritan alone who comprehends life, because he alone is aware of its eternal significance." Affron notes that this passage cannot have failed to please Lillian, in that she had spent much of her life promoting that very image.

Albert Bigelow Payne was the author of a much respected three-volume biography of Mark Twain and had also edited Twain's letters and speeches. A 70-year-old family man, Payne was hopelessly smitten with Lillian. Affron notes, "She became an old man's erotic fantasy, suitably transformed into a quasi-religious fantasy." Payne spent two years collaborating with Lillian on his book, the content of which she seems to have controlled completely. *Life and Lillian Gish* was published in 1932. As Affron says,

> Years later Lillian wrote, "I believe there is a great deal more of him [Payne] in the book than about me." Her remark evades a large portion of the truth. Payne's infatuation dominates the biography because she allowed it to do so. . . . While indulging his romantic fixation, she shaped the story of her life as she wanted. . . . Great actress, humble practitioner and eloquent spokesperson for the universal art of cinema, perfect daughter and sister, etherealized woman—the image had already been in place for years. Under her guidance and inspiration, Payne merely froze it beneath an absurdly unblemished, inhuman polish (264).

Affron's most succinct summary of his project begins with remarks by Louise Brooks, author of *Lulu in Hollywood*, on movie stars and their memory:

> "They've told these lies so often that they believe them. When I started writing my autobiography, I had to strip a thousand humiliating, protective lies off myself, one by one." It was Brooks, the unforgettably amoral Lulu of Pabst's *Pandora's Box*, who was willing to shed her protective lies, not Gish, D.W. Griffith's virginal, ethereal muse, star actress of the 1920s, Broadway leading lady of the 1930s, superpatriot, independent woman, and standard-bearer for the art of cinema. But if Lillian herself

> was reluctant to tamper with the painstakingly constructed image of her life, she gave posterity the means to do so in the extraordinary legacy of her papers, the thousands of letters and notes, the date books and contracts. In these materials, we uncover the texture of privacy that lies beneath the public surface, the details that fill the gaps between the episodes worn hollow in their too frequent recitation. Lillian's papers are an invitation to tell her story once again, and in a way she would not allow while she lived (15).

The newly available papers change our image of Lillian Gish significantly. It is important to stress, however, that she did not consider any of the papers damaging. Had she done so she would have destroyed the offending material; she certainly had time to consider the question and to act on it. But this is a woman who never publicly or privately regretted anything. She never once second-guessed her actions or opinions. In Affron's long book, she is never recorded as saying she was sorry to anyone.

Dorothy Gish palled around with fellow Griffith actresses Miriam Cooper, Mae Marsh, and others, drinking or otherwise in high spirits. In 1914, as the three were crossing Hollywood Boulevard, Dorothy was hit by a car and dragged 40 feet; her first concern was not medical care but "Don't tell Lillian! Don't let Mother know!"

On September 1, 1920, actor Robert Harron shot himself in a lung and died the next day. Whether it was self-inflicted or an accident is undecided. Harron played in many Griffith Biograph films and in many features, often as the lead. Harron and Dorothy Gish had gone out for some time; they were in love and in fact, lovers. Much later Dorothy gave a friend her engagement ring from this period, telling her that she and Harron had planned to marry. Harron was obliged to sit out two features—*Broken Blossoms* (1919) and *Way Down East* (1920)— for both of which Griffith chose Richard Barthelmess. This career pause and his Catholicism did not bother Dorothy, but Lillian would have found both intolerable and would have done her best to prevent the marriage.

Charles Affron details the spin Lillian put on these matters:

> Lillian, who alluded to the romance between Dorothy and Bobby with her usual guardedness in such matters, treated it as a platonic, adolescent, quasi-sibling relationship, only allowing herself to admit it was "for a time, at least, something more" and that Bobby "was terribly in love with Dorothy." Clearly, Lillian expurgated Dorothy's life along with her own (149).

When Dorothy married Rennie, Lillian wrote to her friend Nell that she was fond of Rennie and relieved that she had chosen someone suitable. "What do you think of Dorothy? He is perfectly lovely, Nell. Mother and I are so glad. Imagine what she might have brought home." Lillian's scathing last line indicates that what damns Dorothy in Lillian's eyes is her sexuality itself. Her passionate romances with Harron and later with Louis Calhern and others did not prevent Dorothy from working or keeping in close contact with her family and friends. Perhaps the tight control that Lillian kept on herself, and on others when she could manage it, was threatened by such passion wherever it emerged. When Dorothy's health began to fail seriously in the mid-60s, the humane thing to do would have been to keep her in New York so that she and her friends old and new could have spent time together and said good-bye. Instead Lillian dispatched Dorothy to a clinic in Rapallo, Italy, where she had also sent her mother when her health weakened. Not a few thought that Lillian Gish, the "perfect daughter and sister," was embarrassed by their condition and preferred to keep them out of sight.

Lillian exerted her will not only in the private realms of family and work, but in the public sphere as well. In Chicago, with a play that started in February 1940 and ran for 66 weeks, Gish fell in with far-right people such as Charles and Anne Lindbergh, Col. McCormick, publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, and Robert E. Wood, Chairman of the Board of Sears Roebuck. The America First group they and others formed later in 1940 was based in the hatred of Roosevelt and opposition to any U.S. involvement in the war against Hitler's armies and airplanes. Lillian served on the group's leadership committee and also made a long radio speech on April 1, 1941, tracing her family back to the Revolutionary period. Then she praised Mussolini and even apologized for contemporary Germany because of the turmoil of the 20s, which was due in turn to the unjust peace and high reparations imposed by the Versailles Treaty. But things are different now. "In Germany I saw shoulders straightening, young men looking hopeful." She held back from an endorsement of Nazism, however, saying that in 1932, the change was so apparent that she begged some of her good friends to come to America which was "freer from racial prejudice." Taking the America First Committee position, Lillian debated a University of Chicago professor on the radio and attended a rally at the Hollywood Bowl in June 1941 with Lindbergh and novelist Kathleen Norris.

In August 1941, North Dakota Senator Gerald P. Nye, about to hold hearings on a charge, central to the AFC program, that Hollywood films were pro-interventionist, asked America, "Are you ready to send your boys to bleed and die in Europe, to make the world safe for Barney Balaban and Adolf Zukor and Joseph Schenck?" It was clear that anti-Semitic premises, not quite officially acknowledged by America First, were becoming explicit. Still Lillian lingered. Finally, on September 1, 1941, she resigned without explanation, speculation being that she was about to be called by the Nye committee to say that she was denied work in Hollywood because of her views. Her action, very long delayed, allowed her to limit the damage to her reputation. Thus she could seem to duck responsibility for Lindbergh's notorious September 10 Des Moines speech, where, in literally Hitlerian terms, he warned Jews not to foment war or they would suffer as their European counterparts did. Gish could

also pretend to be in the mainstream when Pearl Harbor brought the U.S. into the war two months and one week after her resignation. Gish's capacity for no-stick outrages arguably equaled Reagan's later "Teflon effect."

In 1960, Lillian, then 67, advised President Eisenhower on how to go about electing another Republican to succeed him: "Is the colored vote strong enough to warrant sending Dr. Ralph Bunche as ambassador to Russia, if you think him equal to the job? A wild thought since I do not know the man. And it might lose too many Southern white votes." Bunche, who had negotiated peace between Israel and Arab states and won a Nobel Prize, was just about universally admired. (He later turned his attention to colonialism and its aftermath.) Gish may have been one of the few who looked at Bunche and saw only his race, not what he had accomplished and the strength of character that made it possible.

The reader expects, as his book moves toward its close, that Affron will turn his interpretative attention to these very disturbing matters. In fact, he hardly comments on these issues in the first go-around and never returns to them later. What he regards as Gish's truly grievous offense is her championship of D.W. Griffith and her campaign to rescue his work and reputation from the oblivion into which they had fallen! In his sympathetic review of the book, Richard Schickel notes,

> It is her legend, self-created and self-propagated, that causes—justifiably, in my opinion—a steady murmur of discontent to arise from Affron's judicious biography. . . . The problem, as he sees it, is Gish's excessive—not to say slightly loopy—idealization of her discoverer and mentor, D.W. Griffith.

There is no doubt that in a number of interviews and other brief statements, Gish's devotion led her to make the deeply flawed Griffith into a flawless ideal. However deeply felt, these were little more than remarks. On two occasions, Gish was involved in extended considerations of Griffith. The more important is her book *The Movies, Mr. Griffith, and Me* (1969). The other is a live television program of which no kinescope or other visual or sound record exists. On April 22, 1951, Fred Coe, producer-director extraordinary of early television, gave Gish an hour to do a program called *Birth of the Movies*. The show may have began, as Affron claims, with a shot of Coe handing a copy of the script to Gish. Limited to a script that he does not identify by date or version, number, Affron concludes, "Less biography than hagiography, the script is a stultifying, moralizing, reductive, and inaccurate portrait of one of cinema's seminal figures" (311). In context, Affron's scathing words are obviously directed at the Gish whose uncritical admiration of Griffith he regards as her greatest moral failing. But a footnote buried in the back of the book informs us that the authors of the script were H.R. Hays and Robert Alan Authur. In this instance, Affron seems to be stacking the deck. The script has a note—"based on the memoirs of Lillian Gish"; an odd title since Gish had not at that time ever published a book.

The Movies, Mr. Griffith, and Me—by far Gish's best-known and most admired book—moves somewhat beyond her earlier positions. Regarding *The Birth of a Nation*, there is here for the first time under her signature a fairly extensive summary of the protests against the film's treatment of African Americans by black and white groups and individuals. As before, Gish acquits Griffith of racism, but not before the persistent and often effective protests, demonstrations, and other bitter opposition to the film are sketched. This includes "twelve lawsuits" that Griffith had to answer. Gish's own insensitivity leads her to boast that "In the South the movie ran continuously for twelve years," not mentioning that the film was used by the KKK as a recruiting tool.

Affron's deploring Gish's reverence for Griffith spills over into an antagonism toward Griffith himself. After *Orphans of the Storm* (1921), Griffith told Lillian Gish that he could not afford her any more and urged her to get the salary she deserved elsewhere. Affron comments:

> It was a far cry from the huge success of *Way Down East* with Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess to the poor reception of Griffith's next picture, *Dream Street*, with Carol Dempster and Ralph Graves (149).

Affron's contrast between "huge success" and "poor reception" is entirely a box-office standard. The important question whether *Dream Street* is a good film or not, and why, he does not ask. Affron would never apply the box-office standard to Fellini, whose script for *8 1/2* (1963) he edited. But Griffith rarely indulged Gish, whereas Fellini outrageously indulged Giulietta Masina in film after film.

Schickel's review follows Affron in this respect, stating his points more bluntly than Affron does. Of Griffith he says,

> When you strip the big talk and the big scenes away, you come to a core obsession that was much less attractive. . . . It involved the placing of young, blonde, virginal women in peril at the hands of brutal, often rapacious, men.

Schickel calls this, rather grandly, Griffith's "ruling sexual kink." He also compares Griffith unfavorably to what he postulates as the "great directors" of the 20s—Eisenstein, Murnau, Lang, von Stroheim, Vidor. Griffith, whom he calls "a nineteenth-century melodramatist," is excluded from the group.

Affron's and Schickel's criticisms of Griffith are little more than remarks; they are hardly worth taking seriously. Both would benefit from a perusal of the literature on film and melodrama, which is not at all the pejorative term they think it is. Virtually all of the films of Lang and Vidor—to take obvious examples—follow a melodramatic plan, but this does not lessen their interest.

Affron and Schickel condemn Gish's campaign to revive Griffith's reputation but ignore its historical context.

From 1931, when he made his last film, to the extraordinary revival of interest in his work in the 1960s, Griffith and his films were almost entirely forgotten. The 60s revival of Griffith and his films was the work of many hands. Especially notable, and highly influential, was *The American Cinema* (1968) by Andrew Sarris, who preferred Griffith's later films to *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*, and considered him a great artist. As for Gish, who had spoken of Griffith's importance for decades, the Zeitgeist eventually caught up with her. In the decade 1978-1987, Gish (aged 85-94) showed Griffith films around the world. That she herself had survived to be a living link to the films she showed made her testimony, in whatever terms she framed it, widely influential.

Above-noted lapses aside, *Lillian Gish: Her Life, Her Legend* is an extraordinary achievement in research, synthesis, and writing. It will surely remain the definitive Gish biography for a generation or more. Above all, there is no going back to biographies that take Gish's own account of her life as their framework.

Brian Henderson is a member of the *FQ* editorial board.

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Moonchild

The Films of Kenneth Anger

Edited by Jack Hunter. London: Creation Books, 2002. $17.95.

On Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (and Other Secret-Flix of Cinemaroc)

By J. Hoberman. New York: Granary, 2001. $29.95.

Long before David Lynch or even John Waters began making movies, Kenneth Anger and Jack Smith created art that dared to fly in the face of refined taste and stodgy morality. Smith's and Anger's work as filmmakers, critics, and authors demolished the boundaries between high and low culture, and introduced the popular to the avant-garde set. Their influence can be seen across the American popular culture spectrum: Anger's films are often cited as being the stylistic progenitors of the music video (a view that, while perhaps technically correct, grossly underestimates the complexity of his works); and Smith's projects are widely recognized as some of the earliest examples of modern performance art.

The release of Anger's *Scorpio Rising* and Smith's *Flaming Creatures* in 1963 signaled a shift in the direction of American underground film. *Scorpio Rising*, with its jarring juxtapositions of pop music and sacrilegious imagery, became a primer for angry young filmmakers everywhere; while *Flaming Creatures*, a visually stunning orgy of excesses, was unlike anything that had ever appeared on the screen before. What set these projects apart from the other underground films being made at the time was the fascinating manner in which they seamlessly incorporated images from Hollywood movies and pop culture into their narratives, creating works that both illustrated and utilized the excesses of the mainstream entertainment industry. But because of their unabashed depictions of what could only be termed a polymorphous-perverse sexuality—without showing explicit sexual content—these films ended up at the center of numerous highly publicized legal battles over the definition of pornography in an ostensibly free society.

Although both Anger and Smith continued to develop new projects after the controversy died down, the effects of the sudden fame (or infamy) associated with these works on the careers of each could not have been more different: Anger became a darling of the rock-and-roll set and Smith disappeared into relative anonymity. For years the only critical material available on either was limited to an obligatory mention in studies of American avant-garde film, or an occasional interview or article in the alternative press. The publication, then, of two new critical studies on the films and careers of Anger and Smith seems a cause for celebration.

Moonchild: The Films of Kenneth Anger is the first installment in Creation Books' projected "quality film studies series," Persistence of Vision. Publicized as "a comprehensive study of Anger's films" and "the definitive study of one of cinema's most charismatic yet elusive innovators," *Moonchild* contains two lengthy articles on Anger and his films by critics Carel Rowe and Anna Powell, with a brief introduction by Mikita Brottman and an annotated filmography by the editor.

Visually speaking, the book is somewhat disappointing. Although it is liberally punctuated with black-and-white images, virtually all of these photos will be familiar to anyone with even a passing interest in Anger's work. Equally troubling is the reduction of illustrative material into marginal additions. Shots from films by Maya Deren, Georges Méliès, Sergei Eisenstein, and Jean Cocteau, for example, appear as postage-stamp-sized images in what is apparently meant to be a kind of visual equivalent of footnotes—an experiment that fails miserably. Any image worth reproducing is worth reproducing in a format that can be clearly seen and understood by the reader. And finally, some of the full-size images are so poorly reproduced that they appear to be out of focus. This is especially unsatisfying given the crisp, clean visuals one normally associates with Anger's films and books. Even more perplexing is why, given the significance of color in Anger's work—a point returned to several times in the articles that appear in this collection—virtually all of *Moonchild*'s photos are in black and white.

In her article "Myth and Symbolism: Blue Velvet," Carel Rowe, whose earlier writings on Anger's films are both insightful and accessible, provides an outstanding introduction to Anger's life and film, adroitly discussing his literary and artistic influences and distinguishing his work from that of his contemporaries. Rowe's essay includes historical notes on Aleister Crowley—the notorious occultist who, by Anger's own account, is the single greatest influence on his

work—and close analyses of both the "magickal" and countercultural aspects of Anger's films.

Anna Powell's essay, "The Occult: A Torch for Lucifer," makes broader attempts to situate Anger's work within the context of Crowley's occult writings and provides detailed analyses of key textual features. The article is well researched and informative, but suffers from the rather distanced tone that it takes with regard to its subject.

Indeed, the greatest problem with this collection is the rather dry, academic approach that it takes. (This is especially surprising, given the lively and informative film-related titles in Creation's catalogue.) Like the black-and-white images that illustrate them, the essays in this book fail to ignite the same type of excitement or interest that the artist and works they purport to represent do. In the end, they nearly drain the life out of some of the most provocative and beautiful films to emerge from the American underground film movement.

A "definitive study" this is not. *Moonchild* fails to capture not only the "magick"—the blending of color, light, and movement; of form and content—that characterizes Anger's work, but also the ironic humor and the playful tone that Anger has worked so hard to create and maintain in these films. Despite these limitations, Hunter's book is a helpful introduction to anyone interested in discovering this mythical figure and his fascinating films. For that reason, if for no other, it is very worthy project. And that Creation has chosen to feature Anger as the subject of the first volume of its "Persistence of Vision" series, too, is promising, suggesting perhaps that future publications will tackle equally overlooked and underrated artists and films.

Film critic and historian J. Hoberman's *On Jack Smith's Flaming Creatures* is a delightful collection of essays on the reclusive Smith and his outrageous projects that, in its almost outlandishly unconventional presentation, nicely echoes the films it discusses. The book opens with an extended description of Smith's 42-minute masterpiece, *Flaming Creatures*, followed by a historical account of the film's production. This is followed, in turn, by a detailed history of the various legal battles that followed the film's premiere. What is most impressive about this collection of materials, though, by far, is the inclusion of a series of slides (some black and white, some color) taken by photographer Norman Solomon during the filming of retakes for *Flaming Creatures*. These photographs represent, as Hoberman points out, the only known documentation of the film's production.

Like Hunter's *Moonchild*, Hoberman's *On Jack Smith's Flaming Creatures* makes extensive use of marginalia, but these secondary texts and images are incorporated into the book's overall disordered feel, ingeniously scattered among the butterflies, tridents, snakes, and tigers that illuminate the text throughout. Indeed, the book design and layout by Chippy (Heung-Heung Hin) is nothing less than inspired in its resurrection of Smith's own highly eclectic and orientalist mode of embellishment. Even the slightly faded colors that characterize Solomon's slides call to mind the outdated film stock that Smith himself was so fond of using. The entire project takes on the feel of a secret scrapbook of sorts, a collection of clippings and sketches to be perused at leisure, when one is willing to devote a restful hour or two to flipping through someone else's lovingly compiled tomes of memorabilia. Hoberman's book is both historically enlightening and at the same time engagingly personal, a suitably extravagant tribute to Smith's long-unrecognized genius.

Robert Cagle writes about film and popular culture.

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Off-White Hollywood

American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom

By Diane Negra. New York: Routledge, 2001. $22.95.

Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom is a smart, well-researched entry into the field of star studies. Its chosen focus is female stardom, as the title indicates, and the way the female star's capacity for disruption of patriarchal values is impacted by issues of ethnicity. From Diane Negra's first evocation of the image of the four caryatids on the Gateway to Hollywood at the intersection of La Brea and Hollywood boulevards in Los Angeles, she unsettles any comfortable assumptions the reader may have about the monolith of white identity. As she points out, the four statues are modeled on Dorothy Dandridge, Mae West, Delores Del Rio, and Anna May Wong as a tribute to multiculturalism, but in each case the figure is homogenized and stripped of its individuality, not to mention its ethnicity. This is a fitting icon for what Negra reveals as the attempts at containment of Hollywood women whose central attractions and drawbacks for the commercial media are founded on their association with their ethnic heritages. But Negra pushes beyond the Gateway's standard association of ethnicity with African-American, Hispanic, and Asian cultures. Because the stars in this study are not usually understood as ethnic Others, the book is likely to raise the startled response, "But isn't she white?," encouraging productive contemplation of the mysteries of whiteness in mass culture representation, and of the politics and economics of Hollywood's "whitening" processes.

Negra negotiates a hyperabundance of material though incisive choices. The obvious candidates for her project would have been the most famous "white ethnics" of the studio period: Rita Hayworth, everyone's favorite assimilated Latina, Marlene Dietrich, Maureen O'Hara, Carmen Miranda, and Ingrid Bergman. However, Negra lights on much less obvious choices: Colleen Moore, Pola Negri, Sonja Henie, and Hedy Lamarr, stars who are rarely mentioned by anyone, even serious critics. This collection of formerly major stars, whose collective careers ranged from 1916 to 1957, demonstrates how they can be understood as touchstones along a significant continuum. Considering them, along with contemporary stars Marisa Tomei and Cher, Negra performs an immense critical service. This

fascinating discussion of their complication of the significance of "whiteness" in the mass media brings to the surface cultural changes—from the turn of the twentieth century to the present—in the invisible racial and ethnic assumptions that underlie the allure of filmic glamour and sex appeal. Meticulously researched, *Off-White Hollywood* also points beyond the immediate work toward questions about the better-known stars.

The chapters on Moore, Negri, Henie, and Lamarr resist the "memory hole" effect of merchandising on popular culture, one of the most important tasks of film studies. All too often, the publicity machines of old Hollywood have eclipsed the films themselves and the stars that populated them by framing them in such ways as to direct audience attention away from evaluation of the work of the stars toward packaging slogans, often forcing stars onto career paths congruent with advertising rather than with their desires and talents. Critics and scholars too can be mesmerized by publicity, mistakenly trivializing performances and star careers primarily because of the publicity apparatus that surrounded them, which is why the submerged and distorted histories of these resurrected "off-white" stars have much to teach us.

Who were Colleen Moore, Pola Negri, Sonja Henie, and Hedy Lamarr, and why should we want to know about them? There is something bracing in the way *Off-White Hollywood* summons a wealth of public-relations material contemporary to their careers and their films that traces the processes by which studios produced the bodies of their female stars. We all know that Rita Hayworth was forced to have electrolysis to reshape her hairline and that Marlene Dietrich had surgery to create the hollows in her cheeks. But there is more than surgery that goes into producing a media body, and Negra throws light on the conversion of foreign flesh into acceptable American stock through on-and-off-screen narratives. Not surprisingly, in Old Hollywood the more successful the publicity promotion, the less ownership there is on the part of the star, the more conventionally successful the career. Conversely, the more ownership of her career on the part of a female star, the less conventionally successful the career. Negra contrasts Colleen Moore and Sonja Henie as examples of the first process, and Pola Negri and Hedy Lamarr as examples of the second. The juxtaposition of Moore's "colleen" and Negri's vamp reveals that "these two female stereotypes were positioned on opposing sides of an economic divide, with the vamp announcing herself as a finished product of her own labor in a way that foreclosed the shaping influence of patriarchy and the Irish girl as a raw resource to be acted on by patriarchal and capitalistic influences." With some qualifications, the same can be said of the book's juxtaposition of Henie's relentlessly Scandinavian ingenue and Lamarr's Mittel-European vamp.

Money is not the only thing that is at stake. Ideology is equally on the line. Colleen Moore's ritual transformation in movies from a childlike waif or wild girl into suitable "marriage material" provides more than simply a happy ending preferred by the paying customers; it also serves as a role model being offered by the American media as part of American efforts to assimilate the great wave of European migration at the turn of the century. The study explores a similar process involving Sonja Henie, who is in at least one film actually mistaken for a child before becoming assimilated through a successful on-screen love affair with an American man. Her Americanization in various films of the 1940s can be productively understood as part of the American attempt to justify its role in Europe during World War II. Sonja Henie's now almost repulsively emphatic whiteness in her association with ice, snow, and all things Nordic suggests a Fascist subtext in her relentless image as a Norwegian version of the twinkie. A photograph in an Ice Capades-like version of traditional Scandinavian garb catches her displaying a childlike desire to please that verges on ethnic hysteria. Even off-screen, there seems to be something of the sort in her compulsion to wear nothing but white, drive a white car, and live in a home appointed with white furnishings. Negra's documentation of Moore and Henie is clear, illustrative, and convincing.

However, as interesting as the ephemeral successes of Moore and Henie may be, one cannot help but be more intrigued by the failure of the careers of both Pola Negri and Hedy Lamarr, which are both marked by Hollywood's failed attempts to use them for the cultural imperatives of the moment—what to do about a tidal wave of immigration and how to frame American reclamation of a fallen Europe during World War II. Then and now, because of their womanly resistence to cultural processing, so different from the "girly" charms of Moore and Henie, they drift toward the mass culture fringes. Negri, as purported Hollywood vamp, never reached the success and fame of Theda Bara, and today has gone the way of the Edsel. While the earlier vamp films of Theda Bara are still easily accessible, and her name synonymous with silent screen seduction, Negri's films are all but impossible to lay hands on. Still photographs of Negri raise questions about why this should be. She has the edgy allure of Bela Lugosi, a feminine vampiric counterpart to him, where Bara to (my) contemporary eyes resembles Margaret Dumont. Part of Negra's explanation is that Negri, with her Italian name and her Polish background, was too indeterminate as a star text to be effectively marketed, unlike Bara, who was never domesticated but was easier to classify, always a merchandising and ideological advantage. But perhaps just because Negri projected a more sexually alluring image than Bara and continued to remind audiences of the "foreign" ethnic threat, her films were disturbing rather than reassuring. This is certainly Negra's take on her career and also on that of Hedy Lamarr. Negra theorizes that Hedy Lamarr was primarily cast in films that were intended to make her assimilation as a good American an icon of America's ability to redeem Europe, but Lamarr's persona was too tinged with scandal, her sexuality too vibrant for an effective narratization of this type. Lamarr's career, though, illuminates a changing trend in Hollywood's uses of the European-scented seductress. Unlike Negri, Lamarr remains in cultural memory, but often as a joke, as in Mel Brooks's naming of the villain in *Blazing Saddles* Hedly Lamarr. Subsequent developments suggest Lamarr as a bellwether for the future of "off-white women" of her type.

Comic containment of ethnic, vampish women is the theme of the discussion of two of our contemporary equivalents of Negri and Lamarr, Marisa Tomei and Cher, who are successfully marketed through star texts that emphatically evade containment but are beset by mockery. (It would be appropriate to think about this as a fairly significant trend which explains the marketing of both Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida, and may account for the fascinating contrast between the representations of Penelope Cruz in the Spanish film *Abre los ojos* [Alejandro Amenábar, 1997] and the American remake, *Vanilla Sky* [Cameron Crowe, 2001], in which she reprised her original role. In the Spanish film, Cruz is an unalloyed beauty queen; in the American remake, while remaining sexually alluring, she is reconstructed as a comic figure.) The price that both Tomei and Cher pay for intransigently displaying the characteristics that doomed the careers of Lamarr and Negri is the derision they endure.

Cher's indeterminate ethnicity has become her hallmark instead of her problem. The threat of the ethnic vamp's sexuality suffuses Tomei and often drives the engines of her film narratives, as in *In the Bedroom*. But if the sensual power of both Cher and Tomei has not been fully domesticated, it has been rendered comic, and sometimes by the actress herself. Cher's celebrity is powerfully inflected by her undying reputation as the Princess of Shlock. In part, she elicits the smirky response because of her self-elected cosmetic surgeries, and because of her hyperbolic exhibitionism. All of this can be interpreted as a preemptive strike on the media discourse about her, but it is an equivocal gain, even though Cher has bought more self-determination than was available to Negri or Lamarr. Nor had her predecessors the option of the postmodern aesthetic that Cher has. Her ethnic indeterminacy is usefully understood as an icon of postmodern comedy, suitable for narratives about physically borderline situations as in *Mask* and about the constructed body, as in the "Postmodern Prometheus" episode of "The X-Files," about which Negra provides an exemplary, revealing discussion. Similarly, she describes Marisa Tomei, despite a body of admirable work, as verging on being a cultural joke. Unlike Cher, Tomei has been manipulated as a comic icon, as in an episode of "Seinfeld" to which Negra refers and through the joking rumors that she got her Academy Award as a mistake made by Jack Palance's erroneous reading of the "winner is" card.

Off-White Hollywood provokes thought that complicates our picture of female stars. It generates multiple ripple effects that impact star studies beyond its own perimeters. First, it points toward an expanded understanding of the repression of women of color in American movies, emphasizing situations that make mythological any attempts to neatly contrast what the mass media do to white female stars and what they do to women of color. Second, it enables us to think again about the women in the Great Tradition of stars, who remain in cultural memory. In the light of *Off-White Hollywood*, must we not reconsider the importance of Carmen Miranda as a precursor to Cher and Tomei, a woman who was neither the good European object nor the indigestible vamp, but rather a comic, ethnically inflected figure of sexual power? Although she mentions Miranda in passing in her prefatory remarks, Negra implicitly leads us toward sad ironies in the contrasts and comparisons between her tragic early death and Cher's ongoing surgical alteration. Her study also implicitly and interestingly positions Rita Hayworth somewhere between the convertible good object and the unassimilable vamp. Similarly, it may well encourage many readers to consider how Moore and Henie supply missing pieces that help us to ask how Hollywood used the Nordic images of Ingrid Bergman and Marlene Dietrich and the Gaelic image of Maureen O'Hara during World War II and later. Negra's ability to write clearly, document richly, and move her readers beyond her immediate subject make *Off-White Hollywood* an important addition to the current critical scene.

Martha P. Nochimson's most recent book is *Screen Couple Chemistry: The Power of 2*. She is currently working on a book about gangster films in Hollywood and Hong Kong.

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Reality Squared

Televisual Discourse on the Real

Edited by James Friedman. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002. $60 cloth; $22.00 paper.

Evaluating collected works means identifying a mosaic's frame. When this border is clear, collected works reflect inward, amplifying usefulness, and simultaneously outward, provoking reader interest. Every collection is thus limited by the combination of disparate voices competing to fulfill an editor's goal. The strength of editor James Friedman's new book, *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real*, is found in the subtraction of its parts from the whole. For the volume is a mixed bag, equal parts brilliant symptomatic readings among less convincing chapters.

Across four sections, the 14 included authors grapple with presentations and representations of the "Real." Trends like panoptics, (mis)remembered history, the slippage of meaning within digital indexes, and distrust of the representational media are brought together without leading to any conclusion. Even so, defining and evaluating the Real seems like the volume's basic motive. Certainly this is what appeals to many readers, which also points to a limitation in Friedman's study.

Given the laudable collegiality among many authors and editors, the forcefulness of any group's work can sometimes be muted by personal relations and theoretical assumptions that seem to overlap to such an extent that interconnectedness becomes the rule. Consider: Friedman is the book's editor, but he is also a doctoral student and archivist at UCLA. His frequent reliance on faculty members from his school, as well as other Los Angeles-based scholars, makes it unclear whether or not the collected works serve his purpose or that of his academic community. The book's subsequent lack of editorial focus further

emphasizes this ambiguity, if for no other reason than Friedman's selection, and combination, of the included articles.

Despite this limitation, however, *Reality Squared* establishes its relevance with regard to "reality TV" programs. The Real is thereby questioned as a fantasy landscape, a particular place and time, an industrial methodology, a genre, a stylistic practice, an ideological consideration, and an important component of current audiovisual culture. Less obvious are the transmedia connections addressed within the book, including television in its varied forms, the Internet and its globally hyperlinked networks, and the regimes of surveillance that are everywhere part of our entertainment-oriented society.

Were it not for the success of certain chapters that outline rhetorical, technical, and/or generic strategies of individual programs and thereby expose the underpinnings and theoretical impetus of what's at stake when presenting, or representing, the Real, Friedman's collection would be less valuable than it is. The first section of the book, "Constructing/Reconstructing History," is the best of the volume. It begins with Rhona J. Berenstein's chapter, "Acting Live: TV Performance, Intimacy, and Immediacy (1945-1955," which lays out the basic tenets of small-screen naturalism as a product both of aesthetic standards in response to the cinematic widescreen and of the various technical requirements of the new, living room-based medium of TV.

Alan Nadel's essay, "'Johnny Yuma Was a Rebel; He Roamed through the West'—Television, Race, and the 'Real' West," follows, offering an utterly persuasive view of early TV Westerns. Nadel's argument develops a counter-narrative of manifest destiny, Eurocentrism, and consequent Westernization of the North American landscape in the nineteenth-century frontier, but also on the Disney- and ABC-produced airwaves broadcasting *Disneyland* and *Johnny Yuma*. Kristen Hatch's "Daytime Politics: Kefauver, McCarthy, and the American Housewife" turns notions of gendered televisual space upside-down by citing numerous accounts of the daytime reception of the Senator Kefauver and Army-McCarthy hearings in the early 1950s. While not revolutionary in her thesis, what Hatch gets right is her carefully footnoted historical accounting of these early TV events that set the tone for commercial sponsorship even as they suggested ways in which TV viewers, especially women, account for their "reality" by using print and TV experts combined with lived experience.

Finally, Vivian Sobchack ends the opening section with her essay "'Happy New Year and Auld Lang Syne': On Televisual Montage and Historical Consciousness." Sobchack is thoroughly knowledgeable about the varied direction of screen, TV, and cultural studies. Proof from the essay itself demonstrates how she applies her thoroughgoing skill to offer spot-on remarks about the slippage between personal memory, professional history-making, and the media construction of spectator subjectivities based on close analyses of New Year's Eve year-end montages.

The second section, "Framing the Real," opens with Arild Fetveit's article, "Reality TV in the Digital Era: A Paradox in Visual Culture?," which presents digital manipulation and recording as a crisis of believability for media professionals and lay-people alike. After sketching the backdrop of the problem of indexical representation in photographic images into the digital age, Fetveit's chapter makes suggestive points, but exists to one side of Friedman's editorial purpose, exploring the margins of "reality squared." Friedman's own chapter follows. Called "Attraction to Distraction: Live Television and the Public Sphere," it expands outward from memories of transcontinental simulcasts and Monday Night Football. Friedman defines various live events, the determining factor of which is the relationship of audiences to the events based on the method and spatio-temporal context of reception. Closing out this section is Daniel Bernardi's "Cyborgs in Cyberspace: White Pride, Pedophilic Pornography, and Donna Haraway's Manifesto." One of two contributions seemingly out of place in this volume, Bernardi invokes Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" to explore cyberspace. He looks at racist, right-leaning, and pornographic sites to disavow any utopian ideal of technology. Interesting points aside, Bernardi's article doesn't belong in Friedman's collection except through the most tenuous of connections between pixilated screens and picture tubes.

Section Three, titled "Real Discourse," opens with Marita Sturken worrying over space, place, and race in "Television Vectors and the Making of a Media Event: The Helicopter, the Freeway Chase, and National Memory." Well written and strongly documented, her essay epitomizes good scholarship, but also demonstrates an obviousness often pointed out by non-academic critics. Toby Miller's "Tomorrow Will Be . . . Risky and Disciplined" focuses on his fascination, as an Australian immigrant in New York City, with American cable's Weather channel. His writing style is smart and informative, putting on a history of weather reporting from its inception in the nineteenth century, but his conclusion and chapter title belie the point. Yes, it might rain tomorrow, but it might not. In-between is Miller's investigation, although concerned citizens living in variable climates would surely intuit his point without deploying the scholarship and skill he so ably supplies.

The last two entries of this section, Gareth Palmer's "'Neighbours from Hell': Producing Incivilities" and Margaret Derosia's "The Court of Last Resort: Making Race, Crime, and Nation on 'America's Most Wanted,'" are very similarly focused on imagined communities and the perverse pleasures of voyeurism. Palmer looks at the Australian TV series to showcase ways citizenship is patterned by network programmers, while Derosia examines the "us" and "them" dichotomy implicit in the construction of "America's Most Wanted" as a spectacle of bodies run amuck on the way to teaching viewers about the demands of legal restriction.

Friedman's final section, "Real Fiction," begins with John Caldwell working out, in "Prime-Time Fiction Theorizes the Docu-Real," a veritable taxonomy of methods employed by prime-time shows to comment on, invoke, and capitalize on relations with the Real. His examples run nearly the length of commercial TV history and include sitcoms, dramas, and the modern incarnation of reality programs, all

the while demonstrating how questions about what defines the Real run through prime time in equal measure to plot and characterization. Then Jodi Dean's "Uncertainty, Conspiracy, Abduction" appears, a misplaced chapter about the hypertext reality of the Internet as analogous to the narrative logic in "The X-Files," along with the volume's finale in Mimi White's "Television, Therapy, and the Social Subject; or, The TV Therapy Machine." Here White problematizes the changing deployment of expertise on TV. Subjected to expanding, mass-media-aided environments filled with infinite audiences and interlocutors, all maintaining authority, expertise is seen sliding away from fixed points into the therapeutic dispersal of confession, exhibition, and conversation.

Teachers and scholars will no doubt eat up portions of Friedman's book. Sturken's chapter, for example, brings together discourses surrounding O.J. Simpson, although her study begins with a statement of space and place rather than concentrating on the complex racial and cultural dynamics at work in the case. Nadel, Hatch, Sobchack, Derosia, and White will also encourage commentators attempting to extrapolate aspects of the larger reality-based media from specific texts. What remains troublesome, though, is the reception of the "odd" articles by Bernardi and Dean, which separately suggest important directions for studies of the Real as it becomes increasingly complex within a digital paradigm. True though this point is, and will continue to be, such topicality is beyond the scope of this volume, as suggested by Friedman's introduction.

The ultimate purpose of *Reality Squared* appears to be an uncovering of what we know by rooting this knowledge to a sense of consequence. Just as the Real exists beyond bounds, confounding attempts to totalize its impact in quests for meaning, its artifacts are nonetheless building blocks used in constructing impressions of our experience, however provisional. As a theme, this is what seeps through Friedman's book, although it is reduced, and its effectiveness limited, by 14 contributors not held uniformly to message.

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The Unmaking of Fascist Aesthetics

By Kriss Ravetto. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2001. $59.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Kriss Ravetto's book *The Unmaking of Fascist Aesthetics* is a bold and challenging examination of the representation of Fascism and Nazism in film since the end of World War II. In constructing the impressive theoretical framework of her analysis, Ravetto both draws on and takes to task the works of some of the most influential postwar European philosophers and cultural critics such as Lyotard, Baudrillard, Habermas, Foucault, Adorno, Barthes, and Deleuze, among others. She then proceeds to discuss the ways in which the cultural, aesthetic, political and ideological debate on Fascism, Nazism, and the Final Solution is either correlated or challenged by its filmic representation. For the most part of her argument, Ravetto concentrates on a selected group of Italian art films made between 1945 and the 1970s. While Neorealist (reduced to *Open City*) and Neodecadentist cinema (exemplified by Visconti's *The Damned*) are discussed in some detail, the core of her book consists of an extended discussion of three of the most polemical Italian films from the mid-70s: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò* (1975), Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974), and Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* (1976). In fact, Ravetto's book can also be read as a long overdue revaluation, or even a panegyric, of these three highly controversial films.

The Unmaking of Fascist Aesthetics is divided into five chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion. In the first chapter, Ravetto lays out the historical and ideological background against which the Pasolini, Cavani, and Wertmüller films were produced, and introduces the main theoretical arguments that will run throughout the book. The second chapter explores the metamorphosis of Fascist and Nazi imagery from a cult of exacerbated virility into icons of degenerate femininity, and it analyzes the representation of Fascism and Nazism in Neorealist and Neodecadentist cinema. The remaining three chapters are assigned each to one film, *Salò, The Night Porter,* and *Seven Beauties*. The films are discussed in great detail, taking into careful consideration (and most often refuting) the profoundly negative responses they aroused. It should also be noted that the essay on Pasolini is substantially longer than the other two, giving a clear indication as to which film the author considers the more valiant and radical examination of the lingering influence of Fascism on contemporary society.

Ravetto begins by arguing that in the early 1970s, the debate on Fascism, Nazism, and the Final Solution became once more urgent and controversial. Distance, both emotional (for those who lived through the war) and generational (for the 1968 generation), allowed for new critical takes on the subject. Many were skeptical of the hegemonic views on Fascism that ruled almost absolute in the postwar years, when the new neoliberal governments were very quick and anxious to disassociate themselves from the shadow of totalitarianism, in order to rebuild—or rather, salvage—national identities. Following Nietzsche's premonition, Ravetto claims that in the postwar years, "history had become a surrogate for religion, distinguishing the damned from the saved and the historian, who becomes a moral judge or therapist, [claiming] staunch rights to the authority of representation." Ravetto is particularly critical of the danger presented by such "official" positions by which history (and therefore its representation) was promptly reduced to a binary economy of good and evil, between the saved and the damned, Fascist and anti-Fascist. Furthermore, such polarization was metonymically linked to everything that was good and evil, which resulted in the association of Nazism with cruelty and degeneration in toto, including politics, ideology, sexuality, and aesthetics. Such a dialectics left no room for the

uncomfortable facts of collaborationism, or the antiheroic survival of the fittest (and not of the noblest or the purest), facts that postwar governments and intellectuals were reluctant to address, embarked as they were on a process to make historical subjects safe to identify with.

By the early 1970s, however, the hitherto seemingly unspeakable evil of Fascism and Nazism was being debated all over the media, in a heated confrontation between those who wanted to forget, or to consider Fascism an aberrant but closed incident of history, and those, like Pasolini, who drew attention to the many ideological and aesthetics traits of Fascism that were still present in (or worse, were inherent to) bourgeois neocapitalist society. The films of Pasolini, Cavani, and Wertmüller, Ravetto argues, not only insist on remembering but, more importantly, actively question the politics of memory as a product of mass media. In doing so, these films bring to the fore the repressed issue of society's and individuals' involvement with the regimes and ridicule the official version of total disengagement, both at the personal and at the institutional level. Pasolini's, Cavani's, and Wertmüller's films make evident their distrust of "authentic" historical narratives (such as the ones presented by Neorealism) through blatant artificiality and stylization, shown in their recourse to camp aesthetics and to icons of popular culture such as the femme fatale figure, and to various sexual, racial, and national identity stereotypes. Moreover, all of these stereotypes are purposely confounded into a violent maelstrom of identities that offers the spectator no positions to identify with. Such chaos of subjectivities problematizes the relationships between personal memory and official history and, particularly and most polemically, between victim and victimizer. Ravetto argues that it is this refusal to explain or to contain the nature of Fascism and Nazism into a safe historical frame (as in Neorealism) or an aesthetic one (as in Neodecadentist films) which made these films so frustrating for audiences and critics, who often rejected them at face value, considering them just as aberrant as the regimes that these films were actually deconstructing—all the more so since these films suggest the immanence of Fascism and Nazism within the social and intellectual fabric of neocapitalism.

The Unmaking of Fascist Aesthetics is an extremely compelling work, hampered only by the paradox of being both extraordinarily ambitious and fairly restrictive in its scope. Its detailed analyses of *Salò, The Night Porter,* and *Seven Beauties* are uniformly excellent and thought-provoking, offering a wealth of critical insights that succeed in both explaining and breaking the many taboos that surrounded these films, from their production to the present day. Other passages of the book, as when Neorealism, Neodecadentism, the femme fatale, Weimar Cinema, psychoanalysis, and masquerading are all collapsed into a single chapter, while impressive as an intellectual endeavor, can only suffer by comparison to the meticulous attention lavished on the case studies. In sum, Ravetto's book makes a very strong case in presenting *Salò, The Night Porter,* and *Seven Beauties* as rigorous cinematic attempts to deal with the legacy of Fascism in Western society and in the contemporary imaginary. It should become essential reading for anyone interested in the more controversial aspects of the debate on the representation of Nazism and Fascism in the postwar era. Lastly, it should be added that Ravetto's book is strictly scholarly material, since its constant reliance on and reference to theoretical and meta-historical models probably renders it inaccessible to a general audience. No one should regret this more than the author, given her sincere preoccupation over the nefarious consequences of simplifying history into binary economies of good and evil. At a time when such economies are being frightfully pressed upon everyone, the issues so passionately analyzed in this book take on a heightened contemporary relevance.

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Book Notes

Contributors to Book Notes: **Richard Armstrong** is a film writer and an associate tutor affiliated to the British Film Institute. **Stephen B. Armstrong**'s writing has appeared in several publications, including *American Writing*, the *Tallahassee Democrat*, and *Film Score Monthly*. **Wheeler Winston Dixon** is the James Ryan Endowed Professor of Film Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. **Tim Kreider**'s first collection of cartoons, *The Pain—When Will It End?*, will be published next March by Fantagraphics Books. **Deron Overpeck** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media at the University of California–Los Angeles.

Antonio, Sheril D. *Contemporary African American Cinema*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. This is a slim book, to its detriment. Antonio examines six films by African-American filmmakers to illustrate her argument that contemporary African-American cinema is marked by both a relationship with the American gangster-film genre and a use of other media such as television and video games to comment on African- American spectators' sense of "double consciousness," their internalization of and relationship to negative images of blacks and black culture. Antonio's thesis is thought-provoking, but her methodology and analyses are poorly articulated. Although all the films selected contain instances of "gangster" lifestyles and/or mediated lives, she provides no rationale for grouping them together. Five of the films come from the gangster genre, which makes *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* (1993) an awkward inclusion. Also, "contemporary" African-American cinema apparently ended in the last century: the most recent film in Antonio's analysis is Spike Lee's *Clockers* (1995). She mentions more recent films, but provides no compelling reason for not including more extensive discussions of them here. At times, she seems unsure in her analysis: she approvingly quotes Roland Barthes on the death of the author (12), then writes about each film in auteurist terms, and frequently neglects to discuss her arguments fully, as though they were self-evident.

At 123 pages, the book has plenty of room for a more comprehensive discussion of contemporary African-American cinema—Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* (2000) seems particularly relevant to the argument here. Antonio offers several compelling insights into African-American cinema; if she had only done more to explain them, her book would be a worthwhile addition to the field.

—Deron Overpeck

Bachman, Gregg, and Thomas J. Slater, eds. *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalized Voices*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002. The key word here is "marginalized"; these are the voices that we don't usually get to hear in more conventional histories of the silent cinema. As such, this is an excellent collection of writings on silent cinema that certainly fills a gap, allowing such major silent figures as Nell Shipman and John Randolph Bray a chance to be heard within the context of contemporary cinema discourse. But more intriguingly, this volume covers every aspect of silent film practice, from production to distribution, in a way that sheds new light on the business and creative aspects of the medium.

After an excellent introduction by the editors, George Potamianos's piece on the distribution of movies in small towns during the formative years of the cinema, 1895-1919, demonstrates how smaller towns received poorer treatment at the hand of the film exchanges because their market wasn't as significant as that of the major metropolises. Judith Thissen's essay on Charles Steiner's Houston Hippodrome documents the important impact of the Yiddish variety hall and motion picture theater on the Lower East Side of Manhattan that offered its customers films and performers shunned by the mainstream media. Anne Morey's fascinating essay, "Have *You* the Power?," on the Palmer Photoplay Corporation, brings to light the nearly forgotten activities of this Babbitesque movie screenplay correspondence school, which encouraged its students to abandon their traditional studies and turn to screenwriting full time. Jean Chateauvert offers a fascinating examination of the power of the gaze within the silent cinema, and animation historian Mark Langer provides a sympathetic and anecdotal appraisal of the work of pioneer animator John Randolph Bray.

Maureen Furniss offers a detailed and insightful examination of the use of extradiegetic music in the silent film, demonstrating how what started as a simply process of "accompaniment" gradually became much more complex. Kay Armatage offers a refreshing look at the life and films of feminist writer/director/actor Cleo Madison; Sam Stoloff presents a new and carefully researched look at the sad career of silent comedian Fatty Arbuckle; and Diane Negra provides a poignant overview of the career of silent star Nita Naldi. Thomas J. Slater's essay on June Mathis finally gives the pioneering writer/producer her due, and Joanna E. Rapf's contribution does the same for her grandfather, Harry Rapf, one of the founding figures of MGM, whose work at the studio was eventually marginalized by the ambitious Dore Schary. This is a superbly detailed and deeply felt book, one that will appeal to the general reader and the scholar alike, with numerous illustrations. The essays are uniformly excellent, and the book has a carefully organized section of notes and sources for further research.

—Wheeler Winston Dixon

Chion, Michel. *Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey.* Translated by Claudia Gorbman. London: British Film Institute, 2001. Michel Chion, a filmmaker as well as a critic, is an advocate of what might be called the "weak auteur theory"; he understands that a film is a collaborative process of trial-and-error, and takes issue with the idea that every frame and cut reflects a conscious directorial decision—even in the case of famously controlling director Stanley Kubrick. In *Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey*, he avoids the near-hagiographic tone of critics and fans awed by the director's command of his medium and examines how, through experimentation, Kubrick gradually cut down dialogue and emphasized pure imagery and music to create an "absolute film"—*2001: A Space Odyssey*. The most illuminating aspect of the book is Chion's insistence on seeing Kubrick's most exhaustively analyzed film as though it were new, a pure text stripped of the explication offered by Clarke's companion novel and all the interpretive baggage it's accumulated over the decades. He points out that the film never clearly confirms the common assumptions that, for example, the lunar monolith's piercing radio signal is triggered by sunlight, or that H.A.L.'s breakdown is caused by a conflict in his programming, or that the suite in which Bowman finds himself at the end of his journey is a sort of cage or zoo in which he is observed by aliens—that it is, in fact, even more open to interpretation than has been supposed. His renewed scrutiny of the film's composition, editing, color, dialogue, and music is precise and often revealing. He has noticed, for example, that in the entire film "there is not a single shot-reverse shot of close-ups of human characters" except for Dave and the faceless but all-seeing H.A.L., which prefigures the final non-confrontation with the unseen aliens. He proposes that *2001* is ultimately about the act of seeing, of necessarily projecting our subjective interpretations on the unknowable.

These central essays are unnecessarily padded with a recapitulation of *2001*'s history from short story to film already familiar to any film geek, and brief surveys of science-fiction cinema before and since *2001*. The final chapter, on *Eyes Wide Shut,* puts forth a startling new theory about that film that some readers will find . . . let's just say idiosyncratic, but also suggests some intriguing parallels between what Chion sees as Kubrick's two great affirmative works: although *2001* is concerned with the universal and eternal, and *EWS* with the intimate and timely (Alice Harford shies away from the word "forever"), both, he believes, are essentially hopeful films, dreams of advent and rebirth.

—Tim Kreider

Larsen, Ernest. *The Usual Suspects*. BFI Modern Classics. London: British Film Institute, 2002. Ernest Larsen's fiction has won him the Edgar Allan Poe Award, a distinction which makes him eminently suited to the dizzying narrative

convolutions and motivational specifics of *The Usual Suspects*. Drawing upon a crime writer's knowledge of human nature, the evolution of the "heist movie" strain of film noir, and pessimism about the methods of multinational capitalism, and leavening the brew with stills of the piquancy of clues, Larsen creates a searching and absorbing post-screening read.

He is especially sensitive to the film's relentlessly masculine universe. Director Bryan Singer "uses Pollack, del Toro, and especially the sleek, muscular, bearded Baldwin (who moves with the grace of a seal in water) more often as animal presence." Homoscocial bonding is rife. "He exploits the visual intensity of the point where confusion and excitement jostle against each other like sticks of dynamite." Larsen suggests that Singer evokes off-screen space to suggest the unseen presence of evil, referring to the film's heady cocktail of contemporary violence and medieval allegory. As "Verbal" Kint famously says, "The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." Larsen's scrupulous analysis of Verbal's interrogation by Agent Kujan celebrates the ducks and feints of Kevin Spacey's devilish performance. Like a microcosm of the film's narrative pirouettes, Larsen puts Verbal at the center of this audacious revision of screenwriting and genre custom. Screenwriter Christopher McQuarrie once worked a stint as a security guard at a New Jersey multiplex, affording him the opportunity to examine what Hollywood audiences wanted in detail. His screenplay is a bravura exercise in narrative organization that Larsen surveys with revealing dexterity.

The book also examines the film's mixed critical fortunes. Responses have tended to dwell upon its clever conceit, consigning its twists and turns to cult status. As Larsen describes it, *The Usual Suspects*' portrait of unstinting (criminal) enterprise and masculinist politics chimes with the buzzing U.S. economy of the 1980s and 90s. But how is the film being read in the light of a post-9/11, post-Enron American experience?

—Richard Armstrong

Silver, Alain, et al., eds. *Film Noir Reader 3*. New York: Limelight, 2002. Since the 1970s, Alain Silver and a small army of scholars, writers, and aficionados have spearheaded a movement in film criticism which strives to answer the seemingly simple question: What is film noir? Silver's latest project, a series of interviews he and co-editors Robert Porfirio and James Ursini conducted over a span of 30 years, takes this question to studio veterans who worked during the noir cycle's peak period (1940-1960). Surprisingly perhaps, several of the interviewees—ranging from directors such as Edward Dmytryk and Billy Wilder to cameramen such as James Wong Howe and John Seitz— separate themselves from the oft-used term, insisting on the individuality of their movies and their creative points of view. That is, as worshipped and copied as they are by neo-noir auteurs like Quentin Tarantino and the Coen brothers, these old-school filmmakers frequently eschew the importance of noir's best-known conventions—the deep shadows, voiceover narration, etc.—and argue that instead of a stylized approach to making movies, they preferred a documentary one.

Otto Preminger, the director of *Laura* and *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, explains, "[Cinema is] an absolutely realistic medium. And I think that the more real you can make the film, the more people will believe it." The great B-movie director Sam Fuller similarly shuns self-conscious manipulations of the set and the camera: "When I was making these damned pictures, I never knew about film noir. . . . I loathe this cliché vision of the underworld. Dark alleys and wet streets. I've done it. Everybody's done it. It becomes fake . . . when it's done to conform to what we call mood. It's easy to . . . fill an alley up with shadows and ashcans and black cats."

Ideas along these lines raise the possibility that noir films, contrary to popular opinion, are not simply, or exclusively, composites of chiaroscuro lighting, odd camera angles, and hard-boiled characters. But if this is so, then what is film noir? An easy, concrete answer probably doesn't exist, and the comments, opinions, and anecdotes collected in this book will probably disappoint fledgling filmmakers who want a practical guide to help them direct the next *Double Indemnity* or *Touch of Evil*. On the other hand, *Film Noir Reader 3* swamps its readers in Cold War-era Hollywood lore and invites us into the intense psyches of 18 industry insiders who tried to entertain audiences with stories about hate, murder, and revenge. Crammed with photographs, biographical sketches, filmographies, and with a lucid introduction by Robert Porfirio, this little book makes watching noir, one of the richest experiences going, even more enjoyable.

—Stephen B. Armstrong